

## **Procedure For Public Question Time**

### **23. Questions by the public**

#### **23.1 General**

Members of the public may ask questions of members of the Cabinet before ordinary meetings of the Council, but such period of questioning shall be restricted to a maximum of 30 minutes except that the Chair shall have discretion to extend the period.

#### **23.2 Order of questions**

Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received, except that the Chair may group together similar questions.

#### **23.3 Notice of questions**

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Service Manager: Democratic Services no later than midday, five working days before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the member of the Council to whom it is to be put.

#### **23.4 Number of questions**

In order to allow the maximum public participation, at any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions.

#### **23.5 Scope of questions**

The Democratic Services Manager may reject a question if it:

- (1) is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the county;
- (2) is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- (3) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
- (4) requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or
- (5) the cost of providing an answer is disproportionate.
- (6) relates to staffing or industrial relation matters;

The Council cannot accept any questions in relation to planning, licensing and other regulatory applications.

If the Chair is of the opinion that a question is one which for whatever reason, cannot properly be asked in an area meeting, he/she will disallow it and inform the resident of his/her decision.

#### 23.6 Record of questions

The Democratic Services Manager will enter each question in a book open to public inspection and will immediately send a copy of the question to the member to whom it is to be put. Rejected questions will include reasons for rejection.

Copies of all questions will be circulated to all members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting.

#### 23.7 Asking the question at the meeting

The Chair will invite the questioner to put the question to the member named in the notice. If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the chairman to put the question on their behalf. The chairman may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply will be given or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.

#### 23.8 Supplemental question

23.8.1 A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. The chairman may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Rule 23.5 above.

23.8.2 The Chair may allow a person present at the meeting to submit further supplementary questions for answer at the particular meeting, if the allotted period in Rule 23.1 has not been exceeded and providing no other person is disadvantaged by allowing such extra questions.

#### 23.9 Written answers

Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer. A copy of any written reply will be attached to the minutes of

the meeting.

#### 23.10 Reference of question to the Cabinet or a committee

Unless the Chair decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Cabinet or the appropriate committee or sub-committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

#### 23.11 Reference of question to Local Area Councils.

The Democratic Services Manager shall have the authority to refer questions from the public on local issues directly to Local Area Councils.