

PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL

General

Members of the public may ask questions of members of the Cabinet at ordinary meetings of the Council.

Notice of Questions

A question may be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or electronically to the Democratic Services Team Leader, no later than 12 noon three working days before the meeting, excluding the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the Portfolio Holder to whom it is to be put.

Number of Questions

At any one meeting no person may submit more than three questions and no more than three questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

Scope of Questions

The Democratic Services Team Leader may reject a question if it:

- is not a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which does not affect the District;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the last six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information covered by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Record of Questions

The Democratic Services Team Leader will enter each question into a register open to public inspection and will publish a schedule of questions on the Council's website. In the case of rejected questions a reason for rejection will be given to the questioner.

Questions will also be available to all Councillors and members of the Public attending the meeting.

Questions at the Meeting

The Chairman will take each question in turn and, at the discretion of the Chairman, questions may be taken as read. Questions will be taken in the order notice of them was received, except that the Chairman may group similar subject matters together.

If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the Chairman to put the question formally on their behalf. The Chairman may formally 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.

Answers to Questions

At the discretion of the Chairman, answers may take the form of:

- a direct oral answer;
- where the desired information is contained in a publication of the Council, or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- a written answer circulated at the meeting or, where a reply cannot be given conveniently at the meeting, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

Any questions 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.

Following the meeting, all responses will be published on the Council's website alongside the minutes of the meeting.

Reference of Question to the Cabinet or a Committee

No debate will take place on any question, but any member of the Council may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Cabinet or appropriate Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

Time Allowed

The total amount of time allocated for the asking of questions at any one meeting shall not exceed twenty minutes.

Questions from the public will not be allowed at the Annual Council Meeting.

Chairman's Ruling

The ruling of the Chairman on any of the proceedings of the Council is final and not open to challenge at the meeting.