

Questions by the Public at Council Meetings

- 13.1 General - Questions may be asked by the public at ordinary Council meetings. They may be addressed to the Mayor, any member of the Executive or any relevant committee or sub-committee chair.
- 13.2 Number, length and order of questions - Each member of the public may ask a maximum of two questions at any meeting. Any question of more than 100 words will be rejected. If more than two questions are asked, only the first two will be considered. Questions will be asked in the order in which notice of them was received except that the Speaker may group together similar questions.
- 13.3 Notice of questions - Written notice of questions must be received by the proper officer by 23:59 on the fifteenth day before the meeting. Each question must state the name of the sender. Copies of the questions will be sent to the Speaker, the Mayor, every member of the Executive, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of any relevant committee. Written responses to questions will be sent to the sender by 5pm on the working day prior to the meeting.

On receipt of a question from a member of the public, officers shall acknowledge the question and, if the question is allowed, explain the process for response, and that the questioner may attend the Council meeting to ask a supplementary question.

- 13.4 Scope of questions - The proper officer may reject a question if, in their opinion: -
- I. It exceeds 100 words in length; or
 - II. It does not relate to a matter for which the Council has powers or duties, unless it is a matter which affects the interests of local people; or
 - III. It is defamatory, frivolous or offensive; or
 - IV. It is substantially the same as a question which has been put and answered at a Council meeting within the last three months; or
 - V. It requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or
 - VI. That responding to the question would entail disproportionate labour or cost; or
 - VII. That the question relates to the circumstances of an individual case; or
 - VIII. It relates to any investigation by the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee.

The proper officer may put questions into an appropriate form without affecting the substance of the question and redirect them if necessary.

- 13.5 Disallowing questions - If any question is disallowed, the proper officer will write to the questioner explaining the reasons for that decision.
- 13.6 Record of questions - so far as possible, printed copies of all questions and answers will be published at the relevant meeting and a copy supplied to the Mayor and all councillors and made available to the public at the meeting. A copy of questions asked and replies given will be filed together and kept as an annex to the Council minutes.
- 13.7 At the meeting - The Speaker will announce that public questions have been received and answered, and are included in the agenda pack.
- 13.8 Supplementary questions - A questioner who has put a question may put one supplementary question to the member who has replied. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply given to it. If technology permits, supplementary questions may be asked virtually as well as in person.
- 13.9 Absence of the questioner - Supplementary questions may only be asked by the questioner. Representatives are not permitted.
- 13.10 Time limit on questions - The total time for answering public supplementary questions at any Council meeting shall not exceed 30 minutes. Supplementary questions will be taken in the same order as the original questions, provided that the proper officer is notified in advance.
- 13.11 No debate on questions - There will not be any debate on any question save that a member may ask that a matter raised by a question be referred to a committee or to the Executive or to an officer to be dealt with.