

## 17. Questions

- 17.1 A period of 30 minutes will be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the public to ask questions.
- 17.2 A separate and further period of 30 minutes will be allowed at each ordinary meeting for Councillors to ask questions.
- 17.3 Any Councillor, resident or business ratepayer of the Borough may put questions to the Mayor, Leader of the Council, any Cabinet Member or any Committee Chair (except those of the Standards or Scrutiny Committees).
- 17.4 Written notice of the question must be given to the Borough Solicitor and Secretary by 12 noon on the third working day before the meeting (i.e. normally noon on the Monday before a Thursday meeting).
- 17.5 Additionally, a Councillor may ask a question about an urgent matter if notice is given by noon on the working day before the meeting.
- 17.6 All questions must either:
- (a) be relevant to the functions or responsibilities of the person to whom they are directed, or the Committee that they chair, or
  - (b) relate to a national or local matter that has a significant impact on the Borough.
- 17.7 No question may be put that:
- (a) relates to any current investigation or complaint concerning any Councillor(s) or former Councillor(s);
  - (b) would require disclosure of confidential or exempt information (unless asked by a Councillor);
  - (c) concerns any planning or licensing application made to the Council;
  - (d) is unsuitable in form, frivolous or derogatory to the dignity of the Council;
  - (e) pursues a formal complaint against the Council (whether in a personal, private, business or professional capacity) where other complaint channels exist (for example, the Local Government Ombudsman or the Council's complaints procedure).
- 17.8 The Mayor will have the final decision whether or not a question complies with this Standing Order, and will also, in cases of doubt, decide to which Councillor a question should be addressed.
- 17.9 Questions will be set out in the agenda by tabling them at the meeting, and will be asked and answered in the order in which they were received (except that a

Councillor who asks more than one question will have their second and subsequent questions listed after all initial questions submitted by Councillors).

- 17.10 If the questioner is not present to ask the question at the appropriate time, it will be answered in writing. A Councillor who is absent may authorise in writing another Councillor to ask his or her question.
- 17.11 Answers will be given by the Councillor to whom the question has been addressed, or by a Councillor nominated by them if the nominated Councillor agrees.
- 17.12 Each Answer will last no more than two minutes and will be given orally unless:
- (a) the desired information is contained in a Council publication, in which case the answer may simply refer to that publication; or
  - (b) the information can more conveniently be given in writing.
- 17.13 A public questioner will then be allowed to ask one relevant supplementary question. Answers to supplementary questions will last no more than one minute. Any Councillor may then move that the issue(s) raised by the public question should be the subject of a report to a future meeting or be referred to Cabinet or an appropriate Committee. This must be moved, seconded and put to the vote without discussion.
- 17.14 After a Councillor's question, two relevant supplementary questions will be allowed, for the first of which the original questioner shall have priority. Answers to supplementary questions will last no more than one minute.
- 17.15 Questions not reached in the time allowed will receive a written reply within ten clear working days after the meeting.
- 17.16 The questions (including supplementary questions) and all answers given, both written and oral, will be recorded in the minutes. A copy of the record to appear in the minutes will be sent in advance to the questioner and the Councillor answering it as soon as it is available. Any other Councillor may receive a copy from the Borough Solicitor and Secretary.
- 17.17 No member of the public may ask more than one question at any meeting.

## **19. Petitions to Council**

- 19.1 All petitions presented to the Council will be dealt with in accordance with the petition scheme set out in Appendix 5 to this section to the Constitution.

## 20. Deputations

- 20.1 Deputations of up to seven residents or business ratepayers of the Borough or their employees may be received at any ordinary or budget meeting.
- 20.2 A deputation must give at least seven clear working days written notice to the Borough Solicitor and Secretary (i.e. normally by Monday of the week before a Thursday meeting). This notice must state the matter that the deputation wishes to raise and the name, address and phone number of the deputation spokesperson. Any associated written representations should be submitted at the same time.
- 20.3 On receiving notice of any deputation, the Mayor will either:
- (a) refer it to the next ordinary or budget meeting, or
  - (b) refer it to Cabinet or the appropriate Committee to be dealt with under Standing Order 51 (provided that the subject matter falls within the terms of reference of the body to which it is referred).
- 20.4 However, a request for a deputation shall be rejected if it:
- (a) is a request from people that have alternative means to express their views through recognised channels, such as Council employees, trade unions representing them, or school governors;
  - (b) is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
  - (c) requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
  - (d) concerns a planning or licensing application;
  - (e) raises a grievance for which there are other established processes for resolution, or
  - (f) relates to any current investigation by or ruling of the Standards Committee and relates to the behaviour or conduct of one or more individual Councillors or former Councillors.
- 20.5 Only deputations relating to the Council's budget will be received at a budget meeting.
- 20.6 Deputations shall be heard in the order in which notice was received.
- 20.7 One spokesperson for each deputation will be allowed to address the meeting for up to two minutes.
- 20.8 Up to 10 minutes will then be allowed for Councillors to ask questions and receive replies from the deputation. Councillors shall not debate any issues arising with any member of the deputation.

20. 9 After any questions, the deputation will withdraw to the public gallery, and the issue will be open for debate. If two deputations are to be heard concerning the same subject, the debate will be after both deputations have been presented.

20.10 The only motions that may be moved about a deputation are:

- (i) to refer the matter to Cabinet or an appropriate Committee;
- (ii) to ask for a report from officers to the next ordinary meeting;
- (iii) to advise the deputation that the matter is already being considered by the Council and that their views will be taken into account when a decision is made, and they will then be notified of the outcome;
- (iv) to advise the deputation that the Council has no powers to act in relation to the matter, but will inform any appropriate body about the issues that they have raised;
- (v) to thank the deputation for bringing the matter to Council's attention.