

## PROPOSED SCHEME FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

### 1. Definition

To encourage participation in the Council meeting, members of the public are invited to ask questions of

- ◆ The Leader;
- ◆ Deputy Leader;
- ◆ Member of the Cabinet; or
- ◆ Chairman of a Panel/Committee.

A public question time shall be part of the formal business of ordinary meetings of the Council and shall continue for a period of 15 minutes. Questions shall be dealt with at the commencement of the meeting.

### 2. Scope

Questions shall be relevant to matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or a matter relating to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the District.

The Council will not permit questions to be asked which are abusive or libellous, relate to a specific or identifiable person, involve personal or prejudicial issues nor matters associated with political parties or organisations where there is recourse to the courts, a tribunal or to a Government Minister. As Monitoring Officer, the interpretation of the above criteria by the Director of Central Services is final.

### 3. Notice

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Director of Central Services by no later than noon, 3 clear working days before the day of the meeting. Each question shall give the name and address of the questioner and shall name the Member of the Council to whom the question is to be put.

No person may submit more than one question but one supplementary question may be asked.

The Director of Central Services will keep a record of submitted questions and send a copy of the question to the Member to whom it is to be put. A member of the public whose question has been rejected will be notified of the reason(s) for its rejection.

### 4. Procedure

The Chairman 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, he/she may ask the Chairman to put the question on their behalf. The Chairman may ask the question on the questioner's behalf or indicate that a written reply will be given or decide, in the absence of the questioner that the question will not be dealt with. A questioner has three

minutes to put a question and a further two minutes for a supplementary question. Questions shall be dealt with in the order in which they are submitted unless the Chairman chooses to group together similar questions.

The questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his/her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.

## **5. Answers**

An answer can take any of the following forms:

- ◆ A direct oral answer;
- ◆ A reference to one of the Council's publications if it answers the question;
- ◆ If it would not be practicable or appropriate to answer a question orally the Member will supply a written answer to the questioner within seven days.

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.

Unless the Chairman 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 appropriate Panel or Committee. Once seconded, such a Motion will be voted on without discussion.