

DISTRICT COUNCIL PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 There will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions at meetings of the District Council, with up to 15 minutes being available for questions from the public at each ordinary meeting of the District Council (excluding the annual meeting of a new Council and extraordinary meetings). The conduct of public question time will be regulated by the Chairman of Council, having regard to the following guidelines. The Chairman's decision on the relevance of a question and on the method of dealing with any issue in connection with this procedure will be final.

2. CONTENT OF QUESTIONS

- 2.1 All questions:

- Must be clear and concise and be relevant to matters for which the Council has powers or duties.
- Should be limited to obtaining information or pressing for action.
- Should be capable of being adequately answered in two minutes.

- 2.2 Questions should not:

- Contain offensive expressions.
- Divulge, or require the answer to divulge, confidential or exempt information.

3. RECIPIENTS OF QUESTIONS

- 3.1 Questions may only be asked of the following:

- The Leader of Council.
- A portfolio holder (Cabinet member).
- The Chairman of a Scrutiny Committee.

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the Council meeting should provide the following details to the Council's Democratic Services by no later than 12.00 noon, two working days before the meeting:

- Name and address and contact details of the person asking the question.
- The name of the organisation if the question is being asked on their behalf.
- Details of the question to be asked.
- The name or position of the member of the Council to whom it is to be put.
- Brief information about how the subject of the question relates to the person asking the question (e.g. as a resident of the area, as a recipient of a service, the owner of a property affected by a proposal).

Only one question may be asked by each member of the public or organisation and the question must relate to a single topic.

- 4.2 The following process will apply at the meeting:

- The Chairman will invite questions to be asked at the meeting in the order in which they are received by Democratic Services.
- The Chairman of the Council will invite the member of the public to put his/her question from the floor of the Council Chamber using the microphone provided.
- The member of the public will then ask their question. Up to a maximum of two minutes will be allowed in which to ask the question
- The named member will respond to the question which may take the form of:
 - (a) a direct oral response of up to a maximum of two minutes;
 - (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
 - (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written response circulated later to the questioner and made available to all members of Council and to the public.
- After the response has been given, the questioner has up to a further minute in which to put one supplementary question or seek clarification of the response to the original question. The supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply and must not introduce new material
- The recipient of the original question then has up to a further two minutes in which to reply to the supplementary question.
- The Chairman of the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, extend the time either for a question or its response.
- 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 response.
- No debate will be allowed on any question or the response.
- A transcript of Public Question Time will be made available to all members of the Council and to the public following the meeting.