

34 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

34.1 Applicability

This Standing Order shall apply to Area Committees and Overview & Scrutiny Committees

34.2 General

The Chair has the power to manage the public question and answer session and has the discretion to reject any question which

- (i) has already been answered
- (ii) is not relevant to the business of the Committee
- (iii) he/she considers unsuitable

Where a number of members of a particular organisation wish to ask questions on related matters the Chair may limit the number of questioners as he/she considers appropriate

Unless otherwise agreed by the Chair, the public question and answer session shall be limited to thirty minutes.

34.3 Questions

Questions should be notified in writing and received by the Chief Executive at least 5 working days before the meeting.

The questioner may ask a maximum of 2 questions.

Each questioner shall have a maximum of 3 minutes to speak

Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and the name and date of the meeting to which it is to be put.

The Chief Executive will record each question received in a book open to public inspection and will immediately send or give a copy of the question to the Chair and any other person to whom the question is likely to be put.

Exceptionally the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive's representative, may accept questions notified in writing at least fifteen minutes before the start of the meeting.

34.4 Procedure at the meeting

The Chair will take the questions in the order he/she considers most appropriate

The questioner will be invited to ask the question.

The Chair or the relevant person present will reply.

The questioner may ask one supplementary question.

Any supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply and must not be interpreted as allowing a debate of either the question or the reply.

Questions and answers given at the meeting will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting

34.5 Absence of questioner

In the absence of the questioner the Chair has discretion over how to deal with the question and may put the question him/herself to the meeting.

34.6 Form of Answers

Answers may take the form of either a direct oral answer or reference to a publication. Where an oral answer cannot immediately be given, a written answer may be given to the questioner as soon as practicable following the meeting.

Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or absence of the appropriate person, will be dealt with by a written answer.

All written answers given following the meeting will be circulated to all members of the body and unless the contents would involve disclosure of exempt or confidential information shall normally be made public.

34.7 Referral of question to the Cabinet or a Committee

The Chair has discretion to decide whether discussion will take place on any question, but any member of the Committee may move that the subject matter be referred to the Cabinet or another appropriate Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.