

Part 2 – The Articles

Chapter 3 – Meeting Rules - General

12. Public Participation in Council meetings

12.1 The public have the right to ask questions and receive answers at meetings of the Council. The arrangements below shall apply to all public meetings of the Council, with the exception of quasi-judicial meetings that relate to planning and licensing which have their own speaking / public involvement arrangements as set out in the respective Articles within this Constitution.

Arrangements for Submitting Public Questions

12.2 Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive by no later than midday 3 working days prior to the meeting in question (e.g. for a meeting taking place on a Tuesday, the deadline for the receipt of questions shall be midday on the Thursday before).

12.3 Questions must relate to a substantive item on the agenda for that meeting.

12.4 An individual may submit only one question per meeting and must include his/her home address when submitting the question (this information will not be disclosed by the Chief Executive).

12.5 The Chief Executive may reject a question if in his/her opinion:

- (i) The question has not complied with the requirements of paragraphs 12.2 – 12.4 above;
- (ii) it is of a vexatious or derogatory nature or otherwise considered improper or inappropriate;
- (iii) it is contrary to any provision of any code, protocol, legal requirement or rule of the Council; and/or
- (iv) the same or similar question has already been submitted by another member of the public for the same meeting or been considered in the previous six months.

12.6 Prior to the Chief Executive rejecting a written question on any of the above grounds, he/she shall consult with the relevant Chair. The Chief Executive shall inform the member of the public who submitted the question of his/her decision as soon as possible.

Procedure for Questions at Council Meetings

12.7 Where the member of the public who submitted the question is present at the meeting, he/she shall be invited to introduce the question (as submitted) or it shall be read out on his/her behalf.

12.8 The relevant Cabinet Member under whose name the report is presented or the relevant Chair (as appropriate) shall provide a verbal response to the question without discussion (which may include an undertaking to provide a more detailed answer in writing).

- 12.9 The Member of the public who submitted the question may ask one supplementary question arising directly out of the initial response, without notice, and the relevant Cabinet Member / Chair shall respond to the supplementary question wherever possible, without discussion. Where the relevant Cabinet Member / Chair is unable to respond to the supplementary question, an undertaking may be given to provide a response in writing. A supplementary question may only be asked by the original questioner and not by a substitute.
- 12.10 Where the member of the public who submitted the question is not present at the meeting, the relevant Cabinet Member / Chair may, at his/her discretion, provide a written response to the question which shall be published.
- 12.11 A period of up to 30 minutes in total shall be available for public questions.
- 12.12 Questions will be asked in the order in which they are received by the Chief Executive. This order will be presented to the meeting and those in attendance at the start of the meeting. At the Chair's discretion, this order may be varied by a simple majority vote of the Members present. Questions and supplementary questions will be asked in accordance with this order, until all contributions have been made or 30 minutes elapsed. Any question not raised and answered within the allotted 30 minutes will receive a written answer, which shall also be published on the Council's website.