

Procedure for Councillor Questions at Council Meetings

1. The purpose of this procedure note is to provide guidance to Members and officers on how questions at Council meetings shall be dealt with.

It is intended to be read alongside, and to be complementary to, paragraphs 50-71 of Part 4 of the Constitution - Council Procedure Rules. If there is any conflict between the two then the Council Procedure Rules shall take precedence.

2. Members are encouraged to deliver any question as early as possible. Paragraphs 54-55 provides that questions on notice should be delivered to the Democratic Governance Manager no later than 5pm nine clear working days before the date of the relevant Council meeting in order to be guaranteed of a written response prior to the council meeting.

Questions received between nine and no later than 5pm four clear working days before a meeting may only receive a verbal response. Any questions received after this deadline will be received at a future meeting.

3. Members are however encouraged to refer the question to the appropriate Head of Service or Director, as appropriate, in the first instance, whenever questions relate to operational issues.
4. In accordance with paragraph 62, questions will be taken in the order of receipt per member, but a member may not ask a second question until all other first questions from other members have been dealt with. The same principle applies to third and subsequent questions.

For example, if member A submits four questions, and afterwards member B and thereafter member C submit two and one question respectively, the order of presentation at the meeting would be:

Q1 Member A
Q2 Member B
Q3 Member C
Q4 Member A
Q5 Member B
Q6-7 Member A

5. No more than 20 questions will be answered at the meeting from the list of questions submitted in accordance with paragraph 64. All questions will be recorded in an update received at the meeting, and any question which was given a verbal response will also receive a written response from the appropriate member no later than 5 clear working days after the meeting and also be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

6. Members should therefore submit their questions listed in priority order in accordance with paragraph 57, and should indicate to Democratic Services prior to the meeting if they do not wish to ask a supplementary question.
7. In exceptional circumstances the Chairman may allow questions without the full period of notice having been given where he or she is satisfied there is sufficient justification. In these circumstances, there is no guarantee that a full or written reply will be given at the meeting.
8. In accordance with paragraph 53 Member questions shall only be permitted at extraordinary meetings if they relate to the subject(s) under consideration at the extraordinary meeting.