

**Wiltshire Council
Health Select Committee
17 January 2024**

**Item 5 – Public Participation
From Chris Caswill**

Question (Q24-01):

To the Chair: For the public record, will you confirm that the agenda and extensive papers for this meeting were published on the Council web site some time during the day of Tuesday 9 January, and that the deadline for public questions guaranteed a written response on the (I hope you will agree) very important and often complicated issues on the Health committee agenda was 5 pm the next day, 10 February ? Again, for the public record, do you believe this 24 hour or so window for the public to digest the detailed material on your agenda and engage with it is sufficient for public questions, the opportunity of which should be central to the scrutiny process which you oversee?

Response:

I can confirm that the papers for this meeting were published on Tuesday 9 January, before 5:00 pm. The timescales set for questions to be guaranteed a written response apply to all committees of the council and are in place to reflect the resource implications of drafting comprehensive written responses to sometimes large numbers of questions that address complex and varying issues.

When questions are received after the given deadline it may still sometimes be possible to provide written responses in advance of the meeting, but this cannot be guaranteed. However, a written response will be provided within 5 working days of the meeting to any questions which receive a verbal response at the meeting. This ensures the public will receive considered responses to their queries in writing.

Question (Q24-02):

To the Chair: There is a Public Participation item on the agendas of all meetings of this Health Select Committee, and each agenda provides a short window in which members of the public can submit questions which would get written answers and a slightly longer deadline for questions which only receive oral answers, usually not recorded.

For each of the years 2022 and 2023 what are the numbers of questions sent in by the public (a) within the deadline for written responses and (b) within the longer deadline, as above? Given the well-established troubled state of the NHS, with its staff shortages, strike actions, GP burnouts and extended waiting times, what is your reaction to those numbers?

Response:

The Committee received four questions from the public in 2022 and two in 2023. All questions received a written response.

During this period, no questions were received outside the timeframe for a response.

There are many forums in which members of the public can raise issues for the attention of elected members. These include directly with their Division member, at meetings of their local area board, with Healthwatch Wiltshire and at meetings of the council's Cabinet, where most significant decisions on matters within the committee's remit are ultimately taken, often following prior scrutiny by the committee, as well as directly to officers in relevant service areas.