

Wiltshire Council

Council

28 February 2012

Questions and Motions on Notice Review

Summary

Following a significant increase in the number of Councillor submitted questions and motions on notice at the last ordinary meeting of Council on 8 November 2011, the Chairman gave notice at that meeting, that he would request the Focus Group on the Review of the Constitution (Focus Group) to review this aspect of the constitution.

Accordingly, the matter was considered by the Focus Group at its meeting on 16 January 2012. As background information, the report considered by the Focus Group is attached. The report sets out:

- The background to the review;
- The key issues resulting from the increase in submitted questions and motions on notice;
- Procedural issues relating to the process;
- Potential options.

The Focus Group's recommendations were considered and agreed by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 25 January 2012 for onward recommendation to Council.

Proposals

That following recommendation by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 25 January 2012, Council resolves:

- (i) not to limit the number of questions or motions a member may submit;
- (ii) not to change the deadline for submission of questions or motions on notice at this stage but to keep the position under review and bring this back to the Focus Group for further consideration in due course.

In the meantime to encourage Councillors to submit questions in particular, in advance of the deadline as far as possible to maximise the time available to prepare responses and in the case of motions, to prepare reports to assist Council in its consideration of them where appropriate;

- (iii) not to introduce a time limit for questions and motions;
- (iv) not to differentiate between operational and non-operational questions;
- (v) to require motions on notice to contain a clear separation between the preamble setting out background information to the motion and the action being sought; and to ask officers to prepare background reports for motions on notice where possible and guidance to assist members in drafting motions;
- (vi) to note that the Chairman in keeping with his role to manage the efficient transaction of business at meetings, had agreed to place questions and notices of motion further down the agenda, after substantive business, in particular items on the budget and policy framework and having regard to the agenda as a whole.

Reason for Proposals

To ensure that the business of the Council can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of members of the Council and the interests of the community. These proposals are considered to be an acceptable compromise to achieve this and to allow processes to be monitored for future review as and when appropriate.

Ian Gibbons
Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services

Appendices

- Appendix A – Report to the Focus Group dated 16 January 2012
- Appendix B – Relevant extracts of the Constitution
- Appendix C - Relevant extract of minutes of the Focus Group