

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

25 February 2025

Notice of Motion No. 2025-02

Restoration of Councillor's Right to Ask Unnotified Questions at the Beginning of Cabinet Meetings

From Cllr Jon Hubbard and Cllr Ian Thorn

This Council notes that, in previous years, elected members had the right to ask questions at the beginning of Cabinet meetings without the need to give prior notice. This right allowed for more dynamic and responsive debate, enabling Councillors to raise urgent issues, hold the Cabinet to account effectively, and engage directly with key decision-makers on matters of local concern, regardless of whether those issues were on the formal agenda for the meeting.

However, this right was removed in a previous decision due to concerns regarding the number of questions some councillors were asking, which led to lengthy discussions and delays during meetings.

In light of this, and recognizing the importance of upholding democratic principles and effective scrutiny, this Council proposes the following:

1) Restoration of the Right to Ask Questions at the Beginning of Cabinet Meetings:

Elected members will once again have the ability to ask questions at the beginning of Cabinet meetings without the need to give prior notice. These questions will not need to be related to any of the items on the formal agenda for the meeting, ensuring that members can raise issues of public concern or matters that arise unexpectedly.

2) Limiting the Number of Questions:

To address previous concerns regarding the excessive number of questions, it is proposed that the number of questions each councillor may ask at the beginning of each Cabinet meeting will be limited to a maximum of three questions per member. This limitation will ensure that questions remain focused and manageable while still allowing for meaningful scrutiny.

3) Review Mechanism:

The Council agrees that a review of this approach will take place after 12 months to assess its impact and ensure that it continues to strike the right balance between open democratic scrutiny and the efficiency of Cabinet meetings.

This motion aims to restore the ability of elected members to carry out their duties with greater responsiveness and accountability, while also ensuring that meetings remain focused and productive.