

Standing Orders – Council Meetings – A24 Public Question Time

Proposed amendments in **bold text**.

A24.1 Members of the public shall be entitled to ask questions/make statements during the Question Time sessions held at the meetings of Council ~~provided that the~~. **The total time allowed for questions or statements shall not exceed 30 minutes except with the consent of the Civic Mayor and a maximum of three public questions may be asked at a single meeting. Questions submitted will be dealt with in the order they are received, with any questions submitted after the maximum number for the Council meeting has been reached refused and referred back to the person asking the question. The Civic Mayor may allow additional questions in exceptional circumstances, those circumstances to be determined by the Civic Mayor.** Questions/statements must:

- (a) relate to the Council and/or the services it provides (or are provided on its behalf) to local people or to a matter that affects local people more than the general public nationally and is relevant to the area or areas of responsibility of the person to whom the question or statement is directed;
- (b) do not relate to planning or licensing applications to be considered by the Authority;
- (c) do not relate to any matter where public consultation is being undertaken in the next six months by the Council; and
- (c) are provided to the Head of Governance Support in writing (including by e-mail if verified by the Head of Governance Support) by no later than 4.00 p.m. on the tenth clear working day before the date of the meeting in order that a suitable response may be prepared. The Civic Mayor may permit a question/statement after this deadline in exceptional circumstances, **those circumstances to be determined by the Civic Mayor**, and the questioner has given a copy of his/her question to the Head of Governance Support by 4.00 p.m. two clear working days prior to the meeting.

However, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Civic Mayor may decline to accept any question or statement if it is in his/her opinion:

- (i) factually inaccurate; or

- (ii) it is identical or materially similar to a question which has been presented to a meeting of Council or a Council committee within the 12 months preceding the Council meeting; or
- (iii) it is illegal, defamatory, scurrilous, irrelevant or otherwise objectionable; or
- (iv) to respond to the question or statement would require a disproportionate amount of officer time (having regard to any possible benefits such work would deliver) and the question or statement is not of such nature that would require a response if made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

And the reasons for rejection will be provided.

- A24.2 The Head of Governance Support will immediately send a copy of the question/statement to the member to whom it has been put and publish the questions/statements.
- A24.3 ~~The total time allowed for questions or statements shall not exceed 30 minutes except with the consent of the Civic Mayor of the body concerned.~~ No person may submit more than **2 one** questions at any one meeting, and no more than **2 one** such questions may be asked on behalf of **an one** organisation.
- A24.4 Each person addressing the meeting shall be restricted to five minutes of speech or such period as the Civic Mayor may allow. Any persons addressing the Council under this Standing Order may only refer to matters relevant to the question or statement and shall:
- (a) not use discriminatory or offensive language;
 - (b) not make any party political statements;
 - (c) not use personal abuse; and
 - (d) treat others with courtesy and with respect.
- If the Civic Mayor considers that any of these requirements have been breached he/she may take such action as he/she considers appropriate (including prohibiting the person addressing the Council from speaking further).
- A24.6 Every question shall be put and answered without discussion although the questioner may be permitted by the Civic Mayor to ask one supplementary question provided that it is relevant to the original question (or the

response thereto) and his/her allocation of five minutes is not exceeded (subject to Standing Order A24.4).

A24.7 **Where a statement is made, this ~~Statements~~ will not be responded to at the meeting.**

A24.8 **Five minutes shall be allocated for the A response to a question and shall take the form of:**

(i) a direct oral answer; or

(ii) where the reply to the question cannot conveniently be given orally, an undertaking that a written reply will be provided.

A24.89 Unless the Civic Mayor decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question or statement, but any member may move that a matter raised by a question or statement be referred to the Executive or appropriate committee or sub-committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

A24.910 Copies of all questions will be circulated to all members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting.

(Note: This Standing Order A24 shall also apply to a member with an interest that means they should not be present when the matter is under consideration but who wishes to make a representation, but having made his/her representations he/she must withdraw from the meeting room and cannot vote on the matter.)