

Motion Details

Proposed by: Cllr Harper-Wallis

Subject: Introduction of Public Questions Agenda Item for South Staffordshire District Council Full Council Meetings

Motion Text:

Recognising the importance of public engagement and transparency in local governance, this motion proposes the introduction of a dedicated Public Questions Agenda Item at each Ordinary meeting of South Staffordshire District Council.

Key Provisions: (information to appear on website)

- **Submission of Questions:** Anyone who lives, works or owns/leases land in the district can submit a question to be answered at a council meeting. Members of the public wishing to submit questions must do so in writing, at least seven clear days prior to the scheduled full council meeting. Submissions must be made to the Monitoring Officer and must include:
 - name and address
 - contact details
 - name of member to whom the question is put

Address and contact details will not be made public; only the name of the person submitting the question will be published. This can be anonymised with the consent of the Monitoring Officer.

- **Review and Selection:** The Council's Monitoring Officer will review all submitted questions. The officer will select questions deemed to be within the public interest for presentation during the meeting and can exclude any questions deemed to be vexatious, repetitious or defamatory. Members of the public can only submit one question per meeting.
- **Presentation Duration:** The presentation of selected public questions by the Monitoring Officer or a member of the public if they wish to present their own question verbally during the meeting. Total time for question presentations will not exceed 15 minutes.
 1. Members of the public must at the time of submitting the question indicate if they wish to present in person.
 2. In the event the member of the public, having elected to ask their question in person, does not attend, the question is not asked.
 3. The member of the public will not be allowed to reply.
 4. The member of the public cannot ask follow-up questions.
- **Documentation:** All questions, including those not selected for presentation, will be included in the accompanying meeting documents for councillors' review.
- **Response Opportunities:**
 1. Councillors: The Member to whom the question was put may, at their discretion, respond verbally, by reference to a published document or in writing.

2. Councillors: Other Members of the Council may, at the discretion of the Chairman, speak to provide clarification in respect of a question. For the avoidance of doubt, further questions from Members and entering into debate on Public Questions is not permitted.
3. Council Officers: Officers of the council are also permitted to provide comments or responses to the questions should they wish to do so.
4. Any questions that remain unanswered at the end of the 15-minute period will be responded to in writing.
5. If the member of the public submitting the question is not present at the meeting, a link to the meeting recording will be provided or a written response will be issued.

Proposed Council Procedure Rules change (to be inserted in the Constitution)

New Rule 12 with subsequent rules being renumbered accordingly.

12.0 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 12.1 A member of the public or organisation may only ask one question per meeting which cannot be more than 50 words long. Questions can only be taken at Ordinary meetings of the council (excluding the Annual General Meeting and any Extraordinary meetings).
- 12.2 All questions pursuant to 11.3.1 above must be submitted to the Monitoring Officer by 5:00pm at least 7 clear working days before the meeting and will be included in the Council Agenda in the order in which they are received.
- 12.3 The Monitoring Officer may rule any question out of order if questions do not meet the requirements detailed in 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 or in their opinion it would risk the defamation of any individual, relates to confidential or exempt information, relates to an individual or personal dealings with the Council or is considered to be frivolous, vexatious or repetitious. The Monitoring Officer may require any person submitting a public question to amend their question so as to comply with these rules, failing which the question will not be considered at the meeting.
- 12.4 An answer will be provided by the person to whom the question was put or their nominee and can be either a direct oral answer, a reference to an already existing publication or, if the reply cannot be conveniently be given orally, or the relevant time period has expired before the question is put (15 minutes for public questions), a written answer will be sent to the person who asked the question and circulated to all Members via e-mail within five clear working days.
- 12.5 Other Members, with the consent of the Chairman, can provide comment upon a question to give clarification in respect of the question asked. Members cannot ask questions in respect of the Public Question nor can they enter into debate.

Consequential amendment needed (with subsequent rules and references being amended accordingly):

2.0 ORDINARY MEETINGS

New (vii) questions from members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12