

# Public Question Time Guidelines



## 1. Policy

- 1.1 At every scheduled Council meeting<sup>1</sup>, Council will hold Public Question Time.
- 1.2 Public question time is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of Councillors, senior staff members or Council as a whole to clarify any matters that may be under consideration or a previously adopted Council policy or decision.
- 1.3 Question time is not an opportunity for debating a response to a question or to make public statements.
- 1.4 Questions will not pre-empt debate on a matter listed on the agenda.

## 2. Procedure

- 2.1 **Questions with notice** can be submitted by 4pm on the Tuesday one week prior to the Council meeting, online or in writing by mail or hand delivery to one of the Council offices.

**Questions without notice** can be submitted on a Questions Without Notice form which must be handed to the Chair before the start of each Council meeting. Copies of the form will be made available at the meeting.

- 2.2 If the person asking the question cannot attend the Council meeting for which their question has been submitted personally, they may nominate another person to ask their question on their behalf.
- 2.3 Council will facilitate the reading of questions on notice at virtual meetings where technology allows.
- 2.4 The person asking the question shall, if able, stand and direct their question to the Chair. Prior to asking the question, the person must state their name and address. If necessary, they may provide a very brief background to their question (30-50 seconds).
- 2.5 During the allocated time questions will be accepted on topics that need not relate to the agenda.
- 2.6 Details of Public Question Time will be minuted.

## 3. Rules

- 3.1 Question time shall not exceed 15 minutes.
- 3.2 A person can ask a maximum of three questions at any one meeting and the presentation of each question shall not exceed two minutes.
- 3.3 The Chair may accept or reject a question related to the formal question put to the meeting.
- 3.4 Questions will not pre-empt debate on a matter listed on the agenda.
- 3.5 The Chair may summarise a question before putting it to the Council meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Question Time only applies to Council meetings listed in the schedule of meetings set by Council annually and is not held during unscheduled Council meetings.

- 3.6 The Chair may disallow a question if it:
- Is phrased as a statement, rather than a question;
  - relates to matters outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
  - is defamatory, abusive or offensive, or if it deals with a subject matter already answered; or
  - is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or member of Council staff.
- 3.7 The Chair or Councillor or member of Council staff to whom a question is referred may:
- decline to answer the question;
  - have the question put on notice for the next Council meeting;
  - agree to provide the questioner with a written response after the Council meeting.
- 3.7 Answers to questions shall be confined to the substance of the question asked and its relationship to matters of concern to the Council.
- 3.8 A question will not be debated.
- 3.9 A written response will be given for all public questions.

#### **4. Behaviour**

- 4.1 Any member of the public addressing the *Council* must extend due courtesy and respect to the Council and the processes under which it operates and must take direction from the *Chair* whenever called on to do so.
- 4.2 Silence must be observed by visitors in the gallery (other than by a person in the gallery who is invited to address the meeting) at all times during a meeting.
- 4.3 Visitors at a meeting must not interject, jeer, call a point of order, vote or take part in the debate or disrupt the meeting and must behave in a respectful and appropriate manner that allows the meeting to proceed without disruption.