

Report

Council



Part 1

Date: 25 July 2017

Subject **Amendment to Standing Orders – Questions to the Leader at Council**

Purpose To propose changes to Standing Orders to introduce a session for Questions to the Leader at full Council meetings.

Author Chief Democratic Services Officer

Ward All Wards

Summary The report sets out the proposal to change Standing Orders to introduce a session for Questions to the Leader at full Council meetings.

Proposal **To adopt the proposals in this report and to change Standing Orders and the Constitution accordingly.**

Action by Chief Democratic Services Officer

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Leader of the Council
- Chief Executive
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Finance
- Head of People and Business Change

Background

The Council's Standing Orders form part of the authority's constitution. Any amendments to the Standing Orders are therefore a matter for full Council to debate and conclude upon.

The Council's administration suggests that the following amendments are made to the Standing Orders relating to the full Council meeting.

Leader's Question Time

It is proposed to introduce an open session for elected members to ask questions of the Leader. The proposed format is below. The general standing orders relating to questions will still apply e.g. 2 minute time limit on question, rules on rejecting questions etc.

The purpose of introducing a Leader's Question Time is to give an opportunity to all Members of the Council to ask questions of the Leader, acting as the Chair of Cabinet and leading Member of the Authority. The existing arrangements for submission of questions to other Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs will remain.

The proposed system is based upon the system used for Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament, and is intended to put a fair and equitable system in place for the allocation of questions.

If approved, standing orders will be redrafted to include the following provisions:

Leader's Question Time

- a) The first question will be posed by the person presiding the Council meeting to the Leader as follows:
 - Before we commence questions from Members, does the Leader have any announcements to make to the Council?
- b) No more than 15 minutes will be allocated at the Council meeting for questions to the Leader. The 15 minute time limit will not include the Leader's announcements, and will commence upon the second question being asked.
- c) Each Member asking a question may ask one supplementary question to clarify any point arising out of the answer received to the original question.
- d) Each opposition group will be allocated one question each, to be asked in order of group membership e.g. the largest opposition group goes first, followed by the second largest opposition group, and so on. Each of the Group Leaders or their appointed deputies will be invited to put the question to the Leader in turn.
- e) After the allocated opposition group questions are completed, questions will be opened up to all Members.
- f) Questions from all other Members will be allocated according to a ballot. Councillors wishing to ask a question of the Leader must notify the Chief Democratic Services Officer in writing by midday on the day of the council meeting. In writing includes electronic mail. The content of the question does not need to be submitted in advance. Question notifications will be grouped according to opposition / ruling party Members then shuffled to produce a random order. Invitations to pose a question will be alternated between opposition and ruling party Members.
- g) The agenda item will end when the 15 minute time is over, or when the list of balloted questions is complete, whichever is the earliest.

Example of question order:

1. Mayor asks Leader to make any announcements

Followed by questions from:

2. Leader of Opposition Group A
3. Leader of Opposition Group B
4. Leader of Opposition Group C
5. Ruling Party Member from notification list
6. Opposition Party Member from notification list
7. Ruling Party Member from notification list
8. Opposition Party Member from notification list

Questions to continue until the notification list is complete, or the 15 minute time limit is up, whichever is the earliest.

Financial Summary

There is no cost to the proposed changes in standing orders.

Proposal

To adopt the proposals in this report and to change Standing Orders and the Constitution accordingly.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There is no financial consequence to the proposed changes in standing orders.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The Council is required to adopt procedural Standing Orders for the conduct of business and debate at meetings, but it is a matter for the Council to determine how these procedural matters should be addressed.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no specific human resources issues arising from the report. From a policy and governance perspective, the Council is required to adopt procedural Standing Orders to enable business to be conducted and meetings to take place. It is a matter for the Council to determine how these matters of procedure should be addressed and deployed.

Background Papers

Council Standing Orders.

Dated: 18 July 2017