

Board/Committee:	Full Council
Date of meeting:	22 March 2022
Title:	Questions at Council meetings
Author:	Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Status:	FOR CONSIDERATION

Purpose

To consider an amendment to the Council's standing orders in relation to the time allowed for Questions at Council meetings.

Recommendation

That the Council agrees to an amendment to Council Standing Orders by the addition of new standing orders as set out in the Appendix to this report

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At the Policy and Organisation Board on 26 July 2021 the Board requested that consideration be given to implementing a time limit on questions at Council meetings.
- 1.2 It was felt that if meetings were recorded by an audio/audio visual device, there should be a time limit on questions, similar to that of Hampshire County Council and that the Constitution be amended to reflect this.
- 1.3 Subsequently, it was felt that a time limit on questions for Council meetings was appropriate, even if meetings were not being audio or audio visually recorded.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 At meetings of the Full Council elected Members can submit questions under Standing Order 3.3.
- 2.2 Currently there is no limit on time allocated to Members' Questions, and they are taken in the order received by the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.
- 2.3 Other local councils vary in their approach to time limits, Hampshire County Council and Eastleigh Borough Council have a time limit of 30 minutes per meeting, Havant Borough Council have a time limit of 3 minutes per question and Fareham Borough Council do not have a time limit.

- 2.4** Those neighbouring councils that do not limit the number of questions a Member can ask require that these are answered in the order in which they are received, however, if a Member asks more than one question, each Member's first question is answered before moving on to second and subsequent questions.
- 2.5** It is felt that 30 minutes is a reasonable amount of time to consider Members' Questions at Full Council meetings and that the order in which the questions are answered be set out within the Council's Standing Orders.
- 2.6** Should there be unanswered Members' Questions after a time limit that has been set within Standing Orders, a written answer should be provided to those questions after the meeting.
- 3.0 Conclusion**
- 3.1** These proposals will tighten the Council's Standing Orders with regard to Questions at Full Council.

Financial Services comments:	None for the purposes of this report
Legal Services comments:	Contained within the report.
Equality and Diversity:	None
Climate Change implications:	None
Crime and Disorder:	None
Service Improvement Plan implications:	None
Corporate Plan:	None
Risk Assessment:	Contained in the report
Background Papers:	<i>Cabinet Office Guidance on Minute taking.</i>
Appendices:	Appendix A: Additional standing orders for Members' questions
Report Author/Lead Officer:	<i>Paul Grant, Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer</i> <i>Lisa Young, Senior Democratic Services Officer</i>