

## **10. Questions by the Public**

### **General**

10.1 Members of the public who are on the Derbyshire County Council register of electors, or are Derbyshire County Council tax payers or non-domestic tax payers, may ask questions of members of the Cabinet at ordinary meetings of the Council. The maximum period of time for questions by the public at a Council Meeting shall be 30 minutes.

### **Order of Questions**

10.2 Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received, except that the Chair may group together similar questions.

### **Notice of Questions**

10.3 A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by fax or electronic mail to the Director of Legal Services no later than 12noon three working days before the Council Meeting (ie on a Friday when Council meets on the following Wednesday). The notice must give the name and address of the questioner and the name of the member of the Council to whom the question is to be put.

### **Number of Questions**

10.4 At any one meeting no person may submit more than one question, and no more than one such question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

### **Scope of Questions**

10.5 The Director of Legal Services may reject a question if it:

- Exceeds 200 words in length;
- is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affects Derbyshire;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

#### **Asking the Question at the Meeting**

10.6 The Chair will invite the questioner to put the question to the member named in the notice. If the questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, he/she may ask the Chair to put the question on his/her behalf. In the absence of the questioner, the Chair may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply will be given, or decide that the question will not be dealt with.

#### **Supplementary Question**

10.7 A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his/her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. The Chair may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Standing Order 9.5 above.

#### **Written Answers**

10.8 The time allocated for questions by the public at each meeting will be 30 minutes. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Chair. Any questions not answered at the end of the time allocated for questions by the public will be answered in writing. Any question that cannot be dealt with during public question time because of the non-attendance of the Member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer.

#### **Reference of Question to the Council Cabinet or a Committee**

10.9 Unless the Chair decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted upon without discussion.

#### **Record of Questions**

10.10 The Director of Legal Services will keep a record, open to public inspection, of all public questions received and will immediately send a copy of the question to the Member to whom it is to be put. Rejected questions will include reasons for the rejection. Copies of all questions will be circulated to all Members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting. The Director of Legal Services will be responsible for sending to the questioner a copy of the answer provided at the Council Meeting as soon as practicable after the Council Meeting.