

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE: 11 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT FULL COUNCIL

Reason for this Report

1. To allow the Committee to consider its current rules and a suggested change in relation to public questions at Council meetings.

Background

2. The consistent and effective engagement of citizens in democracy is recognised as a key challenge for local authorities across the UK. Allowing the public an opportunity to ask questions at decision making meetings is one important way to facilitate public engagement and improve decision making.
3. Cardiff's current arrangements provide an opportunity for any person who resides or works in Cardiff to ask a question of a Cabinet member or Committee Chairperson at meetings of full Council (Council Meeting Procedure Rules, Rule 18).
4. A suggestion has been received from a Member in relation to current arrangements for public questions at full Council.

Issues

Full Council

5. Cardiff's current arrangements allow 15 minutes at each Council meeting for any person who resides or works in Cardiff to ask a question of a Cabinet member or Committee Chairperson. The relevant provisions are set out in the Council Meeting Procedure Rules 18, 19 and 35, appended as **Appendix A**.
6. Key provisions of the Rules include:
 - the question must be submitted 6 working days prior to the day of the Council meeting;

- questions can be ruled out by the Chair if they are not relevant or appropriate (as defined and specified);
 - the question is circulated with the Council papers;
 - answers may be provided orally at the meeting or in writing after the meeting;
 - no more than 5 minutes is allowed for a response to any one question; and
 - each questioner who attends the Council meeting is allowed one minute to ask a supplementary question (without notice) relating to the original question or the answer.
7. The number of public questions asked at Council meetings over the last 2 years is shown below:

<u>Municipal year</u>	<u>No. of Public Questions</u>
2017/18	5
2018/19 (to date)	12

All of the public questions during this period were addressed to Cabinet members. For Members' information, further details of the questions are set out in the table appended as **Appendix B**.

8. As with Members' oral questions, it is customary for public questions to be circulated prior to the Council meeting (but not read out at the meeting) and then to start with the reply to the question at the meeting. However, the rules make no specific provision in this regard.
9. A suggestion has been received that members of the public should be allowed to read out their question at the Council meeting, as a matter of respect for the questioner and so that the proceedings are clear and transparent, particularly to those watching on the webcast, and to demonstrate good democracy. It is recommended that a new paragraph should be added to CPR 18 to this effect: 'The questioner shall be given the opportunity to read their question orally.'
10. The Committee is invited to consider any other changes it may wish to make to the current rules for public questions at full Council.

Legal Implications

11. Under the Constitution Committee's terms of reference, the Committee is responsible for reviewing the Constitution and making recommendations on any appropriate changes to full Council (except for certain specified changes which the Committee may approve itself).
12. Any changes to the Council Meeting Procedure Rules require the approval of full Council.

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising from the report

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree to amend the Council Meeting Procedure Rules, Rule 18, as set out in paragraph 9 of this report and recommend the revised Rule to full Council for approval; and
2. Consider and agree any other changes it may wish to make in relation to the rules on public questions at full Council, and if so, recommend the same to full Council for approval.

DAVINA FIORE
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING
OFFICER
5 February 2019

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Council Meeting Procedure Rules 18, 19 & 35
Appendix B: Public Questions at Council, 2017/18 & 2018/19