

ABERTILLERY & LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

POLICY FOR PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

General

Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.

A member of the public who lives in, works in or represents a public, private, voluntary or community organisation based in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth area may ask a question of the Council at a Council meeting.

The Chair may use their discretion to allow questions from people outside of the local area in exceptional circumstances.

Members of the public may also be permitted, at the discretion of the Chair, to answer questions or give evidence in respect of any item of business on the agenda.

Number of Questions

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

Time Limit

There will be a 15 minute session at each Council meeting for this purpose.

The Chair shall have discretion, with the agreement of the Council, to extend this time limit in exceptional circumstances.

Any question not asked because of insufficient time will be answered subsequently in writing, with a copy of the answer provided to all councillors.

If answering a question or giving evidence, each member of the public may not speak for more than five minutes.

Order of questions

Questions will be asked in the order that notice of them was received. The Chair may use their discretion to amend the order of questions or to group together similar questions.

Notice of Questions

A question may only be asked if the question has been delivered in writing or by e-mail to the Proper Officer no later than midday, 5 clear working days before the date of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and the name of the organisation they represent, if any.

Questions should be addressed to the Clerk via email at clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk or by post to The Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery, NP13 1AE

At the Council meeting, the previously submitted written question shall be read out by the questioner.

If the questioner is not present in the meeting, the question will not be dealt with.

Response to Questions

All questions and answers must be directed through the Chair. An answer may take the form of:

- a direct oral answer;
- where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner and copied to all members of the Council.

There will be no debate on questions or answers.

Supplementary question

The Chair may at his or her discretion permit a supplementary question arising directly out of the original question or the reply. Supplementary questions may not introduce new material.

Recording of questions and answers

A summary of the questions asked under this section and the replies to the questions will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Scope of the Questions

Questions may only be asked on matters about which the Council has powers or duties.

The Chair or Proper Officer may reject a question if it:

- does not meet any of the criteria specified in this policy (e.g. the questioner is from outside the local area or the question is about a matter over which the Council has no power);

- 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;
- discloses or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
- relates to a matter which is the subject of legal or enforcement proceedings or an appeal to a court or tribunal or to a Government Minister or the National Assembly for Wales or an ongoing investigation by the Public Services Ombudsman or relates to a decision which has been made by the Council in exercise of its regulatory functions in respect of which there are legal rights of redress;
- relates to the personal circumstances or conduct of an officer or Councillor or to the conditions of service of individual employees;
- seeks to promote a political party or organisation;
- is a statement and not a genuine enquiry;
- is such that the preparation of the answer would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, public money or effort; or
- is a matter on which the Council must follow other rules or procedures contained in the Constitution.

The decision of the Chair or Proper Officer in the above matters shall be final, but when a question from a member of the public has been rejected under the terms above, the Chair, under that agenda item, will announce to the Council the reason for the rejection and this explanation will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.