



PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

15 minutes (with a possible extension of 2 extra 15 minute periods) are set aside at the beginning of each Council or Committee meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions of Council or the Committee.

What is the procedure for asking questions?

1. Prior to the meeting, you are requested to register your intention to ask a question on the form available in the Council Chambers or Committee Room and provide in writing your name, address, contact details and question(s).
2. When Public Question Time is opened, the Presiding Person will request people to come forward in the order they have registered. When called you are required to:
 - state your name and address; and
 - ask your question.
3. If you have several questions or have a question that is lengthy or complex and you have not provided it in writing you will be asked to write any questions down and hand them to the Chief Executive Officer to ensure an accurate summary of the question can be included in the minutes of the meeting. You will initially be allowed to ask a maximum of two questions or use four minutes total time to ask and receive a response to your questions. This ensures an equal and fair opportunity is provided to all persons wishing to address Council or the Committee.
4. The Presiding Person will then determine who is to respond to your question. The Presiding Person may:
 - respond personally to the question asked;
 - refer the question to another member for a response;
 - refer the question to an employee (through the CEO) for a response;
 - take the question on notice; or
 - decide not to accept the question.
5. Once you have asked two questions the Presiding Person will enquire if you have any more questions. If you do, your request will be noted and placed at the end of the queue (if applicable) and you will be asked to resume your seat in the public gallery.
6. The next person on the list is called.
7. The registration list is worked through until exhausted; after that the Presiding Person will call upon any other persons who did not register if they have a question (e.g. people may have arrived after the meeting started).
8. When such people have asked their questions the Presiding Person may, if time permits, provide an opportunity for those who have already asked a question to ask further questions.
9. The Presiding Person declares Public Question Time closed at the expiration of the allocated time period or when there are no further questions. Council may decide by resolution that question time is to be extended for up to 2 extra periods of 15 minutes.

Who can ask questions?

Any member of the public can ask questions, not just electors or people who live in the district.

What kind of questions *can* be asked?

During Ordinary meetings of Council, any questions affecting the operations of the local government may be asked. No response will be provided to questions that do not relate to a matter affecting the local government.

During Special meetings of Council only questions relating to the purpose of the meeting may be asked.

During Committee meetings only questions relating to the functions of the Committee may be asked.

What kind of questions *cannot* be asked?

If you provide a written question or attempt to verbally ask a question which is considered to be offensive or defamatory in nature, you will be advised by the Presiding Person that the question will not be considered. You may be invited to rephrase your question.

Similarly, the Presiding Person will refuse to accept inappropriate questions, such as those containing defamatory remarks, offensive language or questioning the competency of staff or elected members.

If you attempt to ask a question considered inappropriate or not in good faith, the Presiding Person will rule your question out of order and it will not be recorded in the minutes.

The Presiding Person will also refuse to accept questions that relate to the personal affairs or actions of elected members or employees.

Finally, the Presiding Person may refuse to accept questions relating to confidential matters, legal advice, legal proceedings or other legal processes, or questions that have been answered by earlier questions or at a previous meeting.

What happens to questions that require considerable research?

If a question is raised which requires considerable research then the Presiding Person may point out that a response would require a substantial commitment of the local government's resources.

The Presiding Person may invite you to reconsider your request or refer the matter to the CEO for action following the meeting.

Can I make a statement instead of asking a question?

No. If you attempt to use question time to make statements rather than ask questions, you will be asked by the Presiding Person to "*state your question*" or you may be assisted in phrasing your question.

However, if it is necessary that the question be prefaced by a statement in order to place the question in context, then the statement should be brief.

There is an opportunity for members of the public to make a public statement of maximum 3 minutes during the Deputations segment of the meeting.

What if I ask a question that does not comply with these procedures?

You will be ruled 'out of order' and your question will not be recorded in the minutes if you:

- ask a question that does not comply with these procedures;
- do not abide by a ruling or direction from the Presiding Person; or
- behave in a manner that is disrespectful of the Presiding Person, Council or Committee.