

Full Council Meetings

RULE 12. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

General

12.1 Any Forest of Dean local government elector or a District Council elected Member may at an Ordinary Meeting ask written questions of:

- the Chairman;
- the Leader;
- a Cabinet Member;
- a Member who has been appointed to an outside body;
- Chairmen of committees

about any matter falling within the terms of reference of the Council, Cabinet portfolio, outside body or committee for which they are responsible other than, in relation to a planning or licensing matter, a question concerning an application or issue yet to be considered or determined by the District Council as planning or licensing authority.

12.2 With the consent of the Chairman, written questions may be allowed from visitors to the Forest of Dean or from persons under 18 years of age.

Order of questions

12.3 Questions will be divided in to public and Member questions and, subject to public questions always being listed first on the Council meeting agenda, questions will be listed in the order of being received by the Proper Officer (except where the Proper Officer decides to group together similar questions).

Notice of questions

12.4 Subject to Rule 12.18 below, a question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it to the Proper Officer no later than midday on the sixth Working Day before the day of the meeting. Each question must identify the Member to whom it is to be put. A question from a member of the public must give the name and address of the questioner and confirm whether they propose to attend the meeting in person or send a representative on their behalf (in which case they must, before the start of the meeting, notify the Proper Officer of the name of the representative).

Rejection of questions

- 12.5 The Proper Officer may reject a question if it:
- a) subject to Rule 12.2, is submitted by someone other than a Forest of Dean local government elector or an elected Member;
 - b) is about a matter which does not affect the District or for which the District Council does not have responsibility;
 - c) is frivolous, vexatious or defamatory;
 - d) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of Council in the previous six months;
 - e) requires the disclosure of Confidential or Exempt information; or
 - f) subject to Rule 12.7, is inaccurate, unclear or unreasonably long.

- 12.6 The Proper Officer will inform the questioner, together with the Chairman and the Member to whom the question was to be put, of every question he/she rejects and the reasons for rejection.

Format of questions

- 12.7 The Proper Officer will endeavour to ensure that each written question is framed in such a way as to achieve the objectives of accuracy, clarity and brevity and will, as he/she sees fit, discuss and agree with the questioner any changes to the wording or format of the question to achieve those objectives.

Record of questions and answers

- 12.8 The Proper Officer will ensure that each written question is open to public inspection and will immediately send a copy of the question to the Member to whom it is to be put.
- 12.9 Copies of all questions and written answers to them will be circulated to all Members and be available for public view not later than twenty-four hours before the start of the meeting.

Procedure at Council meeting

- 12.10 Written questions and answers shall not be read out at the Council meeting and there will be no discussion on them.

Supplementary question

- 12.11 A questioner who has put a written question may also put one supplementary question orally and 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 answer. The Chairman may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Rule 12.5 above.

- 12.12 The supplemental question will be responded to by direct oral answer and there will be no discussion on the question or answer. A written answer, to be provided to the questioner following the Council meeting, will suffice where the questioner agrees an oral answer is not necessary or an oral answer cannot conveniently be given at the meeting.

Onwards reference to Cabinet or committee

- 12.13 Any Member may move that a matter raised by a written question be referred to the Cabinet or a committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on Without Debate.

Time for questions

- 12.14 A period of 60 minutes (comprising a maximum of 30 minutes for public questions and a maximum of 30 minutes for Member questions) shall be set aside at a Council meeting for the putting and answering of questions under Rule 12.1.
- 12.15 If any questions or answers remain to be dealt with after the end of the respective 30 minute period in Rule 12.14, the Chairman may at his/her discretion extend that period if satisfied that the remaining questions or answers can be dealt with expeditiously and they are of sufficient urgency.
- 12.16 Any question or answer which cannot be dealt with during the time set aside for questions and answers, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the Member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by written answer to be sent to the questioner following the meeting.

Questions at Extraordinary meetings

- 12.17 Questions and answers in accordance with this Rule will be allowed at an Extraordinary meeting of Council but only in so far as they directly relate to the business for which the meeting was convened.

Questions on item under discussion

- 12.18 A District Council elected Member may ask the Leader, a Cabinet Member, a Member who has been appointed to an outside body or the chairman of a committee a question without notice regarding an item which relates to their responsibilities when that item is being received or is under consideration by Council subject to the Chairman (after consultation with the Proper Officer) being able to disallow a question if it falls within (b-e) of Rule 12.5.