



## PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

**Public Question Time** is a well-established opportunity to come along to meetings and ask questions of your elected representatives on issues of local concern. It was introduced with the aim of increasing public involvement in district council affairs as well as giving members of the public the opportunity to have a greater understanding of the way in which the council conducts its business.

### How does this work?

A total period of 15 minutes is set aside at the start of meetings of the council's main committees which are open to the public (other than meetings of the Planning Committee).

Questions can be asked by residents or non-domestic ratepayers of the district. The questions must be in writing or by email and should be kept as concise as possible. Those which take the form of a long address might not be accepted. When sending a question you must include the name and address of the questioner, a contact telephone number and date.

Questions should be sent to the Democratic Services team – the contact details and address can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Each questioner will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to ask their question. When asking their question they will be asked to read out only the elements which are a question to enable the meeting to run effectively, and not to read out background information. The whole question will however have been made available to members prior to the meeting and will also be reproduced in full in the minutes of the meeting.

At the Chairman's absolute discretion a supplementary question may be permitted. Any supplementary question must relate to the original question. The Chairman may also extend the limit for each question or the total time for public questions.

Questions will be dealt with on a first come, first served basis and will be accepted up to noon on the third working day before the meeting (for example Cabinet meetings on a Tuesday require questions submitted by noon on Thursday before, assuming no bank holidays). In the event that neither the questioner nor his or her representative is present at the meeting, the question will not be asked but the questioner will receive a written response within ten working days from the day of the meeting.

The list of meetings shown on the website to which public question time applies is not exhaustive as there are a number of meetings which are held on an *ad hoc* basis. Sometimes meetings are cancelled or other venues used so it is worthwhile checking with Democratic Services before attending. Details of all forthcoming public meetings are published on the council's website.

## Different public speaking arrangements for the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee deals with planning applications and the planning process provides the opportunity for members of the public to comment on applications prior to them being considered by the Committee. A separate Planning Committee Public Speaking Code of Practice can be found [here](#) or by contacting Democratic Services – the contact details and address can be found at the end of this leaflet.

### Other points you need to know

As with any system there are some exceptions. These are:

- Questions about planning applications being considered by the Planning Committee or Council will not be accepted.
- Public questions should not relate to matters personal to the questioner, his or her spouse, partner or relative.
- The facility to ask a question is not available when the committee acts like a court of law eg in considering licensing matters as those matters are addressed through individual legal processes and through the Courts.
- Questions will not be taken on matters within the various categories of exempt information shown in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (details of which are set out below):
  - (a) Information relating to any individual
  - (b) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
  - (c) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
  - (d) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority
  - (e) Information in respect of which a claim of legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
  - (f) Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
    - to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
    - to make an order or direction under any enactment.
  - (g) Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

### Contact Information

Democratic Services  
Chichester District Council  
East Pallant House  
1 East Pallant  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 1TY

Tel: 01243 534655

Email: [democraticservices@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@chichester.gov.uk)