

Part 4.9 Public Speaking Procedure Rules

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council allows members of the public to ask questions or make statements at meetings, to present petitions, and to make representations at meetings of the Planning Committees. Public speaking at meetings will only be permitted in accordance with these Procedure Rules.
- 1.2 Public speakers will be expected to conduct themselves in an orderly manner and should be mindful of the need to avoid making public statements that could be construed to be defamatory, frivolous, or offensive and should refrain from making allegations regarding the conduct of individual councillors or officers.

2. Questions by the public at Council meetings

2.1 General

Members of the public who have a legitimate interest in the Borough, by way of work or residency, may ask a question at ordinary meetings of the Council. Questions by the public will not be included as an item on agendas for the Annual Meeting or Extraordinary meetings. Questions may be informal or formal.

2.2 Informal questions

- (a) Informal questions may be asked of the Executive before the start of ordinary meetings of Full Council for up to 15 minutes, including replies. No notice needs to be given.
- (b) Questions will be taken in the order in which questioners register with the Democratic Services Officer prior to the start of question time. When read out, each question must be concluded within two minutes. In the event that it is not possible to give a verbal response, a written response will be provided following the meeting.

2.3 Formal questions

Members of the public may ask questions of the Mayor, the Leader, an Executive Portfolio Holder, or a Committee Chair provided:

- (a) it is relevant to some matter over which the Council has powers or duties, or which specifically affects the Borough or part of it, or its residents, and
- (b) it does not relate to planning or licensing applications, or personal, exempt or confidential matters.

2.4 Notice of formal questions

A formal question may only be submitted if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services no later than close of business (5.00pm), four clear working days before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner.

2.5 Order of questions

Questions will be listed in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor or Chairman may group together similar questions.

2.6 Number of questions

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

2.7 Scope of questions

The Joint Chief Executive may reject a question if it:

- is not a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough,
- 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,
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information, or
- is not substantially in the form of a question, or the length of the preamble is disproportionate to the question.

2.8 Record of formal questions

The Joint Chief Executive will immediately send a copy of the question to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder. Where the Joint Chief Executive recommends that the question be rejected, reasons for rejection will be stated.

Copies of all questions and answers will be circulated and made available to councillors and the public attending the meeting. All formal questions submitted will receive a prepared answer.

2.9 Reference of question to the Executive or Committee

Unless the Mayor decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any councillor may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Executive or the appropriate named Committee or Sub-Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

3. Public questions at the Executive and other committees

3.1 Members of the public who have a legitimate interest in the Borough, by way of work or residency, may ask a question at ordinary meetings of the Executive and other committees. Questions by the public will not be included as an item on agendas for Extraordinary meetings. Questions may be informal or formal.

3.2 Informal questions

- (a) Informal questions may be asked of the Leader and/or Executive members at ordinary meetings of the Executive before the start of ordinary meetings for up to 15 minutes, including replies. No notice needs to be given.
- (b) Questions will be taken in the order in which questioners register with the Democratic Services Officer prior to the start of question time. When read out, each question must be concluded within two minutes. If it is not possible

to give a verbal response, a written response will be provided following the meeting.

3.3 Formal questions

Members of the public may ask questions of the Leader, an Executive Portfolio Holder, or a Committee Chair provided:

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3.4 Notice of formal questions

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3.5 Order of questions

Questions will be listed in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor or Chairman may group together similar questions.

3.6 Number of questions

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

3.7 Scope of questions

The Joint Chief Executive may reject a question if it:

- is not a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough,
- 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,
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information, or
- is not substantially in the form of a question, or the length of the preamble is disproportionate to the question.

3.8 Record of formal questions

The Joint Chief Executive will immediately send a copy of the question to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder and/or relevant Committee Chair. Where the Joint Chief Executive recommends that the question be rejected, reasons for rejection will be stated.

Copies of all questions and answers will be circulated and made available to councillors and the public attending the meeting. All formal questions submitted will receive a prepared answer.

4. Public Speaking at Planning Committees on planning and related applications

Criteria to trigger the public speaking scheme

- 4.1 Public speaking at the Planning Committee meetings will be permitted in respect of a planning application and any other related consent applications to be determined by the Committee, where an application due to be considered by one of Waverley's planning committees receives 5 or more letters of support, OR 5 or more letters of objection by the deadline specified for representations.
- 4.2 In order to be counted in relation to the public speaking scheme, the representations must be from separate households.
- 4.3 Where an application triggers the public speaking scheme all those who have submitted written representations in compliance with paragraph 4.2 above will be notified and invited to register to speak at the relevant committee meeting.

Allocation of speaking

- 4.4 A maximum of three persons will be permitted to speak on each application, as follows:
 - one person speaking in objection to the application
 - one person speaking on behalf of the relevant town or parish council
 - one person speaking in support of the application (usually the applicant or their agent)
- 4.5 Subject to the above, the spaces will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. All applications to speak must have been registered no later than noon on the Friday preceding the planning committee meeting (usually on a Wednesday).
- 4.6 The registered speaker may appoint another person to speak on their behalf, or to share their time with other speakers.

Speaking at the meeting

- 4.7 A maximum of four minutes will be allowed for each speaker.
- 4.8 If the speaker has chosen to share their allocated time with another speaker the time allocation will run continuously.
- 4.9 Public speaking will follow the presentation of the planning application by the Planning Officer and precede the Committee's debate on the application. Members of the public speaking in opposition to an application will speak before those speaking in support of an application.
- 4.10 Speakers must confine their statement to relevant material planning issues. There is no opportunity to display maps, photographs, circulate documents or ask questions of others at the meeting.
- 4.11 If a decision on an application is deferred, any objectors or supporters registered to speak on that item will have the opportunity to speak again when the item is brought back to a future committee. If they do not wish to speak, the opportunity for other to register in line with the normal procedure will be afforded.
- 4.12 Applications will not be deferred because of the absence of an objector or supporter, or other person who has registered to speak.

5. Presentation of petitions

Members of the public can submit petitions to Waverley by email or in hard copy addressed to the Joint Chief Executive. The petition will be dealt with in accordance with the Waverley Petition Scheme, a copy of which is attached as Annexe 1 to these Procedure Rules.