

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2019**

### **QUESTIONS AT FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To approve proposed changes to Council Procedure Rule 14 – Questions by Members of the Council and Council Procedure Rule 15 – Questions by the Public as recommended by the Councillors' Commission at their meeting held on 30 September 2019.

#### **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 In response to the increasing number of questions being submitted to the Council under Rule No. 15 – Questions by the Public, the Councillors' Commission have undertaken a review of the current rules for submitting questions by both the public and Members of the Council. The increasing numbers of questions have raised a number of procedural issues, which the Councillors' Commission have now considered.

#### **3.0 Proposals**

- 3.1 One issue for both Member questions and questions from the public is the deadline for submission. Currently this is at least two clear days before the date of the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting). In practice, for example this means that for this meeting of the Council, questions were able to be submitted as late as midnight on Thursday 10 October 2019.
- 3.2 This results in late circulation to all Members of the Council and limited time to prepare appropriate responses. Another consequence is that questions are not able to be published on the agenda, which is required to be published a least 5 working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting). The Commission are proposing a change to the deadline for questions to align with the current deadline for motions, which would enable these to be published with the agenda.
- 3.3 The current Rules also require that public questions appear on the agenda before 'ordinary' items of business with Member questions being considered following the ordinary business and any motions. The Commission are proposing a revision to Rule No. 7 – Order of Business at Meetings of the Council – to enable all questions to be taken together.
- 3.4 The Commission also considered the time allocated to public questions, which Rule No. 15.5 currently prescribes as 30 minutes, with no time limit being prescribed for Member questions. The Commission are proposing a maximum period of 30 minutes be given for both questions from the public and Members, but with the express provision that a minimum of 15 minutes be reserved for public questions.
- 3.5 The Commission are also recommending a change to Rule No. 15.3, which currently requires the Chairman to read the text of the question in full. The Commission felt this was unnecessary given that all questions would now be able to be published with the agenda. In addition, the proposed Rules enable the Member replying greater discretion in terms of circulating a written response, which could then be taken as read at the meeting. These proposals would introduce greater expediency into the current process for handling questions at Council Meetings.

- 3.6 The Commission are also proposing that Rule 15 be strengthened to ensure that those submitting questions only come from residents of the District.
- 3.6 Subject to the proposed changes being agreed by the Council, the Commission suggested that a review of the new arrangements be undertaken after 12 months and greater information be given on the Council's website to guide the public as to the process for asking questions.
- 3.7 The **appendix** to the report sets out the proposed wording for Council Procedure Rule 14 – Questions by Members of the Council and Council Procedure Rule 15 – Questions by the Public at full Council Meetings.

**4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:**

- (a) **the revised Council Procedure Rules 14 and 15, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved;**
- (b) **subject to (a) above, the Director - Governance & Organisational Development revise Council Procedure Rule No. 7 – Order of Business at Meetings of the Council in order to reflect that questions would be taken together before 'ordinary' items of business; and**
- (c) **the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.**

Background Papers

Report and appendices to the Councillors' Commission meetings held on 2 and 30 September 2019.

For further information please contact Nigel Hill on Ext 5243.

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