

Written Questions from the public at Meetings of the Council

(1) Where any member of the public wishes to give written notice of a question to be asked at a meeting of the Council to any of the persons listed below, he/she/they shall give notice of the question, in writing, to the Proper Officer no later than 12.00 noon on the eighth working day before the day of the meeting to which the question is to be asked, but not including the day of the meeting itself: -

- (a) the Mayor (or in his/her/their absence the person presiding);
- (b) the Leader of the Council;
- (c) any other member of the cabinet;
- (d) any person appointed to preside at a committee or sub-committee
- (e) the member or members of the Council nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, on the discharge of the functions of any joint authority or any joint board of which the Council is a constituent authority;
- (f) a nominated member appointed by the Council to the board of Sandwell Homes or of Sandwell Sports and Leisure Trust;
- (g) a member of the Council who is, as a result of action taken by or on behalf of the Council, a member or director of any company;

(2) Every question under (1) above, must be relevant to some matter to which the Council has functions and responsibilities, or which affects the Borough, or part of it, or its citizens or a number of them. Provision for the asking of such questions shall be included on the agenda for each ordinary meeting of the Council. Copies of all questions will be circulated to all members of the Council with the summons and agenda for the meeting. Copies will also be available to the public attending the meeting.

(3) A member may not give notice of more than one question for any particular meeting.

(4) The Proper Officer may reject a question if it - is not about a matter for which the Council has functions and responsibilities, or which does not affect the Borough, or part of it, or its citizens or a number of them; - in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, is or is likely to be defamatory, and/or inflammatory, and/or frivolous and/or offensive; - is substantially the same as a question that has been put at a meeting of the Council in the last six months;

(5) The Proper Officer will keep a record of each question submitted, which will be open to public inspection and retained for a period of 12 months. Details of all rejected questions will include the reasons for their rejection.

(6) A member of the public may withdraw a question he/she/they has submitted by giving written notice to the proper officer. That member shall then be entitled to give notice of an alternative question providing this is done within the timescales set out in this Standing Order.

(7) In special circumstances, if the person presiding at the meeting considers that there is merit in a question(s) being asked, although the required notice has not been given, he/she/they may permit the question(s) to be asked provided that the question is given to the Proper Officer not later than 12 noon on the day of the meeting.

(8) Every question shall be asked as reproduced under Standing Order 2 and answered without discussion. The person to whom it was put may, however, seek clarification as to its meaning. The person to whom the question has been asked may decline to answer it.

(9) Where the member having given notice of the question is not present at the meeting, the person presiding will direct that the question be deferred to the next ordinary meeting of the Council or that a written response be provided

(10) A member asking a question under this Standing Order may, once their question has been responded to, ask one relevant supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question, whether it is answered or not, or arising from the reply. The question must be put as a direct question and not preceded by a statement. The person presiding at the meeting will determine if the supplementary question is valid in accordance with the criteria in paragraph (4) above. The supplementary question shall otherwise be responded to without discussion. The person to whom it is asked may ask for clarification or further detail of the meaning of the question.

(11) A response to a question or supplementary question may be given by the person to whom it has been asked, or by a person on his/her/their behalf, in the form of:- (a) an oral response; (b) a reference to information contained in some official publication; (c) a written response, to the member asking the question