

COUNCIL MEETING – 13TH OCTOBER 2011

Extract from the Minutes of the Constitution Committee Meeting on 22nd September 2011

23 QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Committee considered proposed changes to the arrangements for questions at Council meetings.

Officers had received a number of comments from Members about the current arrangements for questions at Council meetings:

- question time took too long;
- too many questions were being asked as part of question time;
- there was no reason why questions should not be asked of Officers or Portfolio Holders, thereby removing the need for these to be asked at meetings of Council where other pressing business needed to be dealt with;
- primary questions were sometimes asked which contained a number of subsidiary questions;
- there was need for clarity around rules relating to supplementary questions where a number of questions were asked as part of one primary question;
- some submitted questions were inappropriate.

Generally speaking, the existing rules appeared to be fit for purpose but the Committee was asked to consider whether any amendments should be proposed to Council.

A number of potential amendments to the question time provisions had been circulated for the Committee's consideration as set out in Appendix B to the report.

The views of the scrutiny chairmen on the proposals were reported at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Council be recommended that

(1) subject to the following amendments, the revised arrangements for questions at Council meetings as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved and adopted:

- a maximum period of 30 minutes be allocated for Members' questions at Council;
- questions be selected by the Mayor in accordance with the criteria as amended;

- those Members submitting more than one question may indicate the priority of importance of each question;
- criterion 2(a) be deleted;
- criterion 2(e) be amended to include reference to executive business;
- paragraphs 3, 5 and 10 be deleted;
- written answers to accepted questions which cannot be dealt with at the meeting be copied to all Members of the Council and not just the questioner;
- the current deadline of 3 clear working days for the submission of questions be retained.

(2) the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer be authorised to make such additions and amendments to the Constitution as she considers are necessary to give effect to the wishes of Council; and

(3) the arrangements be reviewed after 12 months.

[Note: a revised version of Appendix B incorporating the amendments agreed at the Committee's meeting is attached.]