

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Constitution Committee

Date of Meeting: 22nd September 2011
Report of: Democratic and Registration Services Manager
Subject/Title: Questions at Council Meetings

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report invites the Committee to consider the existing and potential future arrangements for questions at Council meetings.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee decide whether changes are needed to the existing Constitutional arrangements for questions at Council meetings and, if so, what changes should take place.
- 2.2 Where changes are proposed, that these be recommended to the next Meeting of Council and that Council be asked to authorise the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to make such changes and additions to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the wishes of Council.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 In order for Members and Officers to clearly understand the Council's approach.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards are affected.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All local Ward Members are affected.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The Council's agreed arrangements must be clearly documented in the Constitution.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 No such implications arise from the proposals contained in this report.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Once agreed, the arrangements will be included in the Constitution which can be amended by Council following a recommendation of the Committee.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 No risks would appear to arise from the proposals contained in this report.

10.0 Background

- 10.1 Following comments made by the Mayor at the Annual Council meeting, and further discussions with officers, the Chairman of the Constitution Committee agreed that a report should be considered at the first meeting of the Committee of the new Municipal Year. At that meeting, the Committee asked for this matter to be listed on its work programme. This report therefore comes to the Committee in accordance with the timing of that programme.

11.0 Information

- 11.1 A number of views have been expressed about the Council's current arrangements for questions at Council meetings. Whilst some Members are no doubt content with the arrangements, comments have been made that:
- question time takes too long;
 - too many questions are being asked as part of question time;
 - there is 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 needs to be dealt with;
 - primary questions are sometimes asked which contain a number of subsidiary questions;
 - there is need for clarity around rules relating to supplementary questions where a number of questions are asked as part of one primary question;
 - some submitted questions are inappropriate.
- 11.2 The Council's existing arrangements for questions at Council meetings are set out in Appendix A to this report. Generally speaking, the existing rules would appear to be fit for purpose but the Committee is encouraged to consider whether any of the further provisions listed in Appendix B, or any other provisions, should be adopted by Council in addition to the existing provisions.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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