

14. Questions by Members

General

At Cabinet meetings, members of the council may ask questions about budget and policy at a strategic level, and will be given an opportunity to speak on each item before the vote is taken.

In addition, a councillor may ask a question at a committee meeting, except that questions may not be asked at meetings of the Planning Committee, Appeals Committee, Licensing Committee or Appointments Committee that relate to items on the agenda for that meeting.

Notice of written questions

To guarantee a reply, members must submit their question in writing or by email to the Clerk no earlier than four weeks and no later than 48 hours (not including weekends or bank holidays) prior to the start of the meeting. Any written question received by the deadline will receive a written response.

A question may be asked at the meeting without prior notice but in these circumstances there is no guarantee that a full reply will be given at the meeting.

Scope of questions

The Monitoring Officer will reject a question if it:

- (a) is not related to policy or budget issues
- (b) is not about a matter for which the council has a responsibility, or which affects the Isle of Wight
- (c) is defamatory, frivolous or offensive
- (d) is not a question but a statement
- (e) relates to an individual or the questioner's own particular circumstances
- (f) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the committee in the past six months
- (g) requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information
- (h) names or identifies individual service users, members of staff or members/staff of partner agencies
- (i) is not submitted within the requisite timeframe

Record of written questions

Democratic Services will give a unique reference number to each written question received within the required notice period and enter this number and the question in an electronic file open to public inspection. Rejected written questions will include reasons for rejection. Copies of all written questions will be circulated to members at the meeting. Following the meeting, the answer will be recorded adjacent to the question in the electronic file. Minutes of the meeting will record who asked a question, the subject matter and the reference number of the question and answer.

For the avoidance of doubt this rule does not apply to oral questions asked at the meeting.

Asking written questions at the meeting

The question shall be put to and answered by the relevant member of the committee without discussion. The answer to a member's question may be given orally or in writing.

Oral questions

In addition to the above, councillors may ask oral questions of the committee without any notice. The period allowed for these questions and answers shall be 10 minutes. The minutes of the meeting will record who asked an oral question, the subject matter, the councillor who responded and the answer.

The chairman may ask for any oral question to be submitted in writing.

Supplemental question

The councillor shall be allowed one further supplementary question provided it is relevant to the original question and does not introduce a new subject matter.

Written answers

Any written question that cannot be dealt with during member questions, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer.

Declined questions

If, in the view of the chairman, the question asked (either in writing or orally) is not within the remit of the meeting, they will decline to accept the question at the meeting and instruct that either a written reply be given after the meeting (and that this be recorded in the record maintained) or that the question be directed to the relevant Cabinet member or other committee outside the meeting. Where the chairman so directs for oral questions the questioner shall submit the question in writing.