

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 7 October 2021

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
None;

Cabinet Meetings - Questions for Cabinet

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report proposes a new "Questions for Cabinet" process to allow all councillors to ask questions at meetings of Cabinet, and further to allow councillors and members of the public to submit written questions to Cabinet and have the question and answer published.

Recommendation

That Cabinet be asked to recommend to Full Council that the rules for Questions for Cabinet, as set out in Appendix 'A', be adopted.

Background and Advice

Currently, the Cabinet Standing orders do not allow speaking at Cabinet by anyone other than the Cabinet, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the main opposition, and Lead Members (where they are standing in for a Cabinet Member who is absent).

In order to allow Councillors and members of the public to raise issues of interest or concern about items on the agenda, a new approach is proposed.

The new approach will be called "Questions for Cabinet", and will be a 30 minute slot at the start of every Cabinet meeting. The approach can be summarised as follows:

- The Cabinet agenda will be published 5 clear working days before the meeting. This will usually be on the Wednesday of the week before Cabinet.
- Councillors and members of the public will have until 12 midday on the Monday before Cabinet to submit a question about an item on the agenda.

- Any individual, councillor or member of the public, may only submit one question per meeting.
- Questions may be ruled out of order by the Monitoring Officer if:
 - They are not related to an item on the agenda
 - They are about a decision due to come to the Development Control or Regulatory Committee
 - They have been asked and received an answer within the last 6 months
 - They are offensive or vexatious
- Questions from members of the public will be in writing only. Councillors, however, may attend Cabinet in person to ask their question. Note that Councillors who wish to ask their question in person must still submit it in writing by the deadline.
- At the meeting, councillors present may ask their question. An answer will be provided by the Cabinet Member. The Councillor may then ask a supplementary, which again the Cabinet Member will answer.
- If the Councillor chooses to submit a question but not attend the meeting, their question will be treated as a written question and receive a written response.
- Questions will be asked and answered in the order received.
- At the end of 30 minutes, any questions left unanswered will receive a written answer.
- Questions about Part II (confidential) items cannot be asked in person and will receive a written answer.
- All questions asked in person will be recorded in the minutes of Cabinet.
- All written questions and answers, from Councillors and the public, will also be published as a supplementary to the minutes (questions and answers on Part II reports may be redacted as necessary) no more than 1 week after the Cabinet meeting.

Appendix 'A' sets out the proposed new Standing Orders to facilitate this process. Formal approval for this change sits with the Full Council, and so Cabinet is asked to endorse the approach and recommend it to Full Council for adoption.

Consultations

Practice at other large authorities has been reviewed and considered.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

N/A

There are no legal or financial implications.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A