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Meeting Procedure Rules

Appendix: Questions

1 Public Written Questions

- 1.1 Members of the public residing or working in the District, or their representative, may put a question to a relevant Meeting (see Meetings Rules Table).
- 1.2 Questions must:
 - 1.2.1 relate to the business of the Council;
 - 1.2.2 be a matter for which the Council has responsibility; or
 - 1.2.3 be related to the wellbeing of West Berkshire.

2 Councillors' Written Questions

- 2.1 Councillors may put a question to any Member of the Executive relating to:
 - 2.1.1 the business of the Council;
 - 2.1.2 a matter over which the Council has responsibility; or
 - 2.1.3 the wellbeing of West Berkshire.
- 2.2 Councillors may put a question to any Chairman of a Committee relating to the business of that Committee.

3 Procedure - Submission

- 3.1 Questions may only be asked at an Ordinary Meeting of the Body in question.
- 3.2 Questions must be submitted in writing by post, or electronic mail, to the Monitoring Officer and must specify:
 - 3.2.1 the name of the Councillor; or
 - 3.2.2 the name, address and contact telephone number of the member of the public (or representative).
- 3.3 Questions that do not relate to an item of business on the Agenda for the Meeting in question must be submitted no later than 10:00, seven Clear Working Days before the Meeting.
- 3.4 Questions relating to an item of business on the Meeting Agenda must be submitted no later than 10:00, two Clear Working Days before the Meeting.
- 3.5 Provided that the Body Chairman consents, a question relates to an urgent matter may be considered by a Body if it is submitted to the Monitoring Officer by 10:00 on the day of the Meeting.

4 Procedure - Scrutiny

- 4.1 The Monitoring Officer may reject a question if (in their sole opinion):
 - 4.1.1 it is not about a matter over which the Body to which it has been put has responsibility;
 - 4.1.2 it contains an excessive element of statement beyond the scope of the question;
 - 4.1.3 it is defamatory, frivolous, abusive, or argumentative;
 - 4.1.4 it requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;

- 4.1.5 it relates to a licensing or planning application; or
- 4.1.6 it is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of any Body in the past six months.
- 4.2 Where a question has been rejected a letter will be sent to the questioner setting out the reasons for the rejection.

5 Procedure – Written Questions

- 5.1 The Meeting Chairman will nominate an appropriate person to provide an answer to each question in turn or indicate how such an answer will be provided.
- 5.2 An answer may take the form of:
 - 5.2.1 a direct oral answer;
 - 5.2.2 a reference to a Council publication containing the desired information;
 - 5.2.3 a written answer where an oral reply cannot conveniently be given.

6 Procedure – Supplementary Questions

- 6.1 A person having received an answer to a written question may ask one supplementary question which must:
 - 6.1.1 arise directly out of the answer given to the original question; and
 - 6.1.2 not introduce any new subject matter.
- 6.2 For the avoidance of doubt the person answering the original question, or the Meeting Chairman, will invite the questioner to ask a supplementary question if the questioner has one.
- 6.3 Questioners must confine their contributions to questions, and answers and must not make statements or attempt to debate the matter.
- 6.4 Where the Meeting Chairman considers that a questioner is contravening this rule they will stop the individual concerned from speaking on this matter.

7 Order of Questions and Multiple Questions

- 7.1 The Meeting Agenda shall list the questions to be answered in order, but the Meeting Chairman may determine that the questions shall be answered in a different order.
- 7.2 Subject to the Meeting Chairman's discretion, if there is more than one questioner at any Meeting only their first question shall be answered in turn.
- 7.3 If, after all initial questions have been answered, there is sufficient time available the Meeting Chairman may allow answers to be given to such questions as remain in such order as the Meeting Chairman determines.

8 Time Limit on Questions

- 8.1 Subject to other Parts (eg in relation to the Council Budget Meeting), the time allowed for written and supplementary questions at any meeting shall not exceed thirty minutes for public questions or one hour for Councillors' questions or such period as the Meeting Chairman may permit.
- 8.2 Questions not answered within that period shall receive a written reply.

9 Written Questions concerning the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (TVPCP) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS)

- 9.1 Subject to the rules within this Appendix, a Councillor may also ask:
 - 9.1.1 the Council's representative on the TVPCP a question on the functions or performance of the TVPCP; or
 - 9.1.2 one of the Council's representatives on the RBFRS a question on the functions or performance of the RBFRS.