

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Constitution – Supplementary Questions from Members at Council Meetings

8 November 2012

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider a request from a Councillor to increase the number of supplementary questions which Members are allowed to ask at Council meetings. (Council Procedure Rule 13.6 refers).

This report is public

RECOMMENDATION

(1) That the Committee consider the request.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A issue has been raised by a Councillor regarding supplementary questions from Councillors at full Council. Council Procedure Rule 13.6 currently states:-

A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his or her question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply and will be restricted and will be restricted to two minute duration.

1.2 The Councillor in question has expressed a view that one supplementary question often raises another question which has to be asked at the next meeting. Hence when questions are delayed as they were in July 2012, when Members' questions were deferred to the September meeting, the follow on is delayed for an extra month. He requested that the matter be brought before this Committee, which has the authority to consider amendments to the Council Procedure Rules.

2.0 Proposal

2.2 Members consider whether Council Procedure Rule 13.6 should be amended to allow more than one supplementary question.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

3.1 The options for the Committee to consider are to:

- Keep the current limit of one supplementary allowed per question asked
- Increase the limit to two (or more) supplementary questions allowed per question asked
- Completely remove the limit on the number of supplementary questions allowed.
- Introduce some other arrangement, for instance, keeping the limit of one supplementary question but allowing further questions to be read out at the meeting and responded to in writing (Reigate and Banstead Borough Council use this sort of system).

3.2 The advantages and disadvantages can be simply expressed. Keeping to the current limit of one question saves time during the meeting and any increase on the limit is likely to make Council meetings longer. However, Members may feel that the current limit is too restrictive and further questions without notice should be allowed at the meeting in the interests of clarity and openness.

4.0 Other authorities

4.1 The Democratic Services Manager has consulted with other authorities to find out how many supplementary questions are allowed at their Council meetings. The results are shown in the attached appendix and show that the majority of those who responded have the same arrangements in place as Lancaster City Council.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Members are asked to consider the issues raised by this report.

<p>RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no legal implications as a result of this report.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no financial implications as a result of this report.</p>
<p>OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>Human Resources:</p> <p>None.</p>

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Constitution, Part 4, Section 1, para 13.6

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