

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Constitution – Public Speaking at Council Meetings

8 November 2012

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To approve amendments to the Council's Constitution regarding the required deadlines, set out in Council Procedure Rule 14, for members of the public to submit a request to address a Council meeting.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Constitution be amended as shown at Appendix A.**
- (2) That the current guidance leaflet for the public, which is made available on the Council's website and supplied to members of the public enquiring about speaking, be replaced with the revised version shown at Appendix B.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the last meeting of this Committee on 13 September, Members considered the deadlines for public speaking at Council meetings, in particular the deadline for registering to speak. The current deadline invariably comes before the agenda publication date, making it impossible for the public to view the agenda before registering to speak on a particular topic or to know whether it will be included on the agenda.
- 1.2 Members felt that it was time to rectify this arrangement and extend the deadline to midday 3 working days before the meeting, in line with the deadline for public questions. The Committee asked that the Constitution be reworded accordingly and brought back to this meeting for approval along with a revised guidance document for the public.
- 1.3 The opportunity has also been taken to simplify the wording of the relevant Council Procedure Rule, and to delete the reference to petitions, as there is a separate part of the Constitution (Part 10) which relates to petitions. A member of the public who wishes to present a petition whilst at the same time addressing Council is at liberty to do so, but the general rules on addresses would still apply.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the changes to the Constitution set out at Appendix A. The effect of these changes is to allow a window of opportunity for the public to view the Council agenda before deciding whether or not to register to speak. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak at Council

meetings about any matter which affects the area or the inhabitants of Lancaster District. The issue does not have to be on the agenda, but the proposed change will enable the public to speak on agenda items.

- 2.2 At the last meeting, Members raised the question of what measures might be put in place to ensure that the number of public speakers did not become unmanageable. Paragraph 14.6 covers this, introducing the same limits which are in place for speaking at Cabinet, a maximum of 10 speakers per meeting on a first come, first served basis, with groups of speakers with similar views to be represented by a spokesperson.
- 2.3 Democratic Services will monitor the new arrangements and if any issues arise regarding the limits set or any other aspect of the public speaking rules, they will be reported back to the Committee for consideration.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 3.1 The options for the Committee are to approve the attached documents or not, or to approve the attached document with amendments.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Members are asked to approve the amendments to the Constitution regarding public speaking at Council meetings, in line with the decision made at the last Committee meeting.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK None.
CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing) None.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS There are no legal implications as a result of this report.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS There would be a very small cost for reprinting the leaflet, however this would be minimal and met within existing budgets.
OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Human Resources: None.

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 and Public Speaking at Council/Cabinet leaflets published by Governance (Democratic Services).

Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers

Telephone: 01524 582057

E-mail: dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk

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