



Report To: Civic Affairs Committee
Lead Officer: Interim Chief Executive

23 March 2017

Review of Standing Orders – questions at Council meetings

Purpose

1. To make a recommendation to Council on whether councillors should be able to continue to ask questions at Council without notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes. This has been trialled since 28 January 2016 and a decision needs to be taken on whether to make this change permanent, which would mean amending the Council's Standing Orders.

Recommendations

2. That the Civic Affairs Committee decides whether or not to recommend to Council that it amends Standing Orders to permanently include provision for Members to ask questions at meetings of Council without notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes.

Background

3. Standing Orders were reviewed at the meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on 12 January 2016, where a number of amendments to Standing Orders were recommended to Council and subsequently approved at its meeting on 28 January 2016.
4. As part of these amendments the Council agreed to the introduction of a new format for questions by Members at meetings of Council. This consisted of the usual process for submitting written questions by notice followed by the ability to ask questions without notice, including questions in relation to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, within a total timeframe of 30 minutes. It was agreed that this would be reviewed by the Civic Affairs Committee in six months.
5. The Committee carried out that review at its meeting on 28 July 2016 where it decided to extend the review period by six months as only one question had been asked without notice during the original trial period.

Considerations

6. There have been four Council meetings during the extended trial period and eight questions without notice have been asked. The system appears to be working well and is understood by councillors.
7. The Civic Affairs Committee is invited to make a recommendation to Council on whether the provision of asking questions without notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes by Members should be made permanent, with the Council's Standing Orders amended accordingly.

Options

8. The Civic Affairs Committee could:
 - Recommend to Council that the provision for Members to ask questions without notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes be made permanent;
 - recommend to Council not to continue with the provision for Members to ask questions without notice;
 - recommend a further trial period, such period to be specified

Implications

9. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, there are no significant amendments.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

10. No consultation has been necessary on the content of this report.

Background Papers

No additional background papers were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Report Author:

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