

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. **General.** Organisations or anyone who works or lives in Rother District may ask a question to a member of the Executive at ordinary meetings of the Council. A period of up to 30 minutes at the beginning of each meeting is allowed for questions.
2. **Order of questions.** Questions will be asked in the order in which they have been received although similar questions may be grouped together.
3. **Notice of questions.** A question may only be asked, if notice, including name and address of questioner, is submitted in writing or email to the Head of Paid Service or Democratic Services no later than the close of business five clear working days before the day of the meeting (not including weekends, banks holidays or the day of the meeting). This normally means that when a Council meeting takes place on a Monday, the Deadline will be 4.30pm on Friday (10 days earlier).
4. **Number of questions.** No more than one question per meeting can be submitted by any organisation or person who works or lives in the Rother District.
5. **Scope of questions.** The Head of Paid Service may reject a question if it:
 - is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility for or which affects the district;
 - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
 - is substantially the same as a question which has been ask at a meeting of the Council in the past six months;
 - requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
 - relates to an individual/group business or the questioner's own particular circumstances;
 - relates to a matter which is the subject of legal or enforcement proceedings or an appeal to a tribunal or to a Government minister or an investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman;
 - relates to the personal circumstances or conduct of any officer and councillor or conditions of service of employees;
 - relates to the activities and aims of a political party or organisation;
 - relates to individual planning applications; or
 - is a statement and not a genuine enquiry.

In addition the Chairman may rule that a question will not be answered because:

- The preparation of the answer would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, money or effort.

The ruling of the Chairman of the Council as advised by the Head of Paid Service in the above matter is final.

6. **Record of questions.** The Head of Paid Service records each question in a book, which is open to public inspection, and sends a copy of the question to the member of the Executive to whom it is to be put. Rejected questions include reasons for rejection. Copies of all questions are circulated to all Members and are made available to the public attending the meeting. The minutes of the meeting records the details of the questions that have been asked (including any supplementary questions) and by whom, together with the answers given.
7. **Asking your question at the meeting.** Questioners need to identify themselves at the meeting; however they are not required to ask their questions as they will have been circulated before the start of the meeting together with a written answer. A questioner who submits a written question can ask the Chairman to put the question on their behalf. The Chairman may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply has been given or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.
8. **Supplementary question.** A questioner who has asked a question in person may also ask a supplementary question without notice to the member of the Executive who has replied to the original question. The supplementary question must relate to the answer given. The Chairman may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds as detailed in 5 above.
9. **Written answers.** A question that cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the member of the Executive to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer.
10. **Reference of question to the Executive or a Committee.** Unless the Chairman decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Executive or the appropriate committee or sub-committee. Once seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.