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Your right to ask questions at Council

15 February 2023

The public may not ask questions at Full Council meetings. Only most committees.

Annex 4.5 – Protocol for Members of the Public Speaking at Committees

1. Questions and statements from the public
   1.1. At ordinary meetings of the council's committees and sub-committees, up to 30 minutes will be set aside for questions and statements:
   i. On matters within the terms of reference of the body in question.
   ii. From any member of the public who lives, works, attends an educational establishment, or who owns or leases land in the Borough.
   1.2. This protocol is not applicable to advisory panels, regulatory committees, Epsom Walton Downs Conservators and Epsom Walton Downs Consultative Committee.
   1.3. The topic of the question or statement may not relate to:
   i. Specific planning or licensing cases, …….
   ii. The personal affairs of an individual.
   iii. A matter which is exempt from disclosure or confidential under the Local Government Act 1972.
   1.4. Questions and statements which in the view of the Chair are defamatory, offensive, vexatious or frivolous will not be accepted.
   1.5. Each question or statement will be limited to 3 minutes in length.
   1.6. This protocol does not cover questions and statements from the public for meetings of the Planning Committee or licensing sub-committees, which are not permitted……. For the avoidance of doubt, questions and statements from the public relating to planning or licensing committees matters can only be made at those specific committees with the consent of the Chair of that committee.
2. Procedure for Questions
   2.1. The chair of the committee shall indicate the item on the agenda at which questions may be put by individual members of the public. Questions are welcomed from the members of the public and must satisfy the conditions below.
   2.2. All questions must consist of one question only they cannot consist of multiple parts. This does not preclude a member of the public from asking another question on a separate topic, time permitting.
   2.3. A person who wishes to ask a question must submit their question in writing (either in hard copy or by email) to the Democratic Services Manager at democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk. The written question must arrive by noon on the third working day before the day of the meeting.
   2.4. The member of the public submitting a question must set out:
   i. the wording of the question they wish to ask.
   ii. an address, email address or telephone number at which they can be contacted before and after the meeting.
   iii. The details of where they live, work, attend an educational establishment, own or lease land in the Borough.
   2.5. Following receipt of a written question, the Democratic Services Manager will ensure that the member of the public asking the question is contacted and told whether their request complies with the conditions above. If contact details are not readily identifiable or have not been supplied, the question will not be accepted even if in all other respects it is valid.
   2.6. At the committee meeting, questions must be addressed to the Chair of the relevant committee / sub-committee. The Chair will invite the questioner to put the question at the meeting.
   2.7. The Chair may decline to answer a question, may give an answer orally at the meeting or may provide a written reply. If available, the questioner will be supplied with a written answer before the meeting.
   2.8. Questions regarding items on the agenda for the meeting may not receive an answer, as the matter will not yet have been considered.
   2.9. At the meeting the Chair will ask the questioner if the response answers their concern or if they wish to ask one supplementary question. If a supplementary question is asked, it must arise from the reply given. The Chair may decline to answer a supplementary question or invite other councillors or officers of the relevant body to contribute to a response.
   2.10. If a member of the public wishes to ask more than one question, their second question shall be taken after all other individuals who wish to ask a question have been given the opportunity to do so.

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As an alternative to submitting a written question, a member of the public may address a meeting of a committee or sub-committee for up to three minutes.

3.1. A person wishing to make a statement at a meeting must provide written notice (via hard copy or email) including a summary of the subject matter, to the Democratic Services Manager. The written notice must arrive by noon one working day before the day of the meeting.

3.2. Speakers may not engage in further debate once their statements have been made

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