

## Written Questions from the public at Council Meetings

Residents or business rate payers of Sandwell may submit a written question to any of the persons listed below at ordinary meetings of the Council:-

- (a) the Mayor (or in their absence the person presiding);
- (b) the Leader of the Council;
- (c) any other member of the cabinet;
- (d) any person appointed to preside at a committee or sub-committee;
- (e) the member or members of the Council nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, on the discharge of the functions of any joint authority or any joint board of which the Council is a constituent authority;
- (f) a member appointed by the Council to an Outside Body (which shall include any trust or company)

Notice of a question **must** be given in writing to the Head of Paid Service no later than 12.00 midnight, 10 working days prior to a meeting of the Council at which the question is to be asked but not including the day of the meeting itself, and **must** give the name and address of the questioner (the address of the resident/ratepayer will not be published with the question). Questions need to be submitted to [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)

No more than one question per meeting can be submitted by any organisation or person who is a resident or business rate payer in Sandwell. The question must be no more than 100 words in length.

A period of no more than 15 minutes shall be allocated at each ordinary meeting of the Council for public questions. Questions shall be put in the order they are received by the Head of Paid Service, except that the person



presiding may group together similar 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, or that affects the borough;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a question that has been asked at a meeting of the Council in the past 6 months;
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
- relates to an individual/group/business or the questioner's own particular circumstances or any other matter which only directly affects them, their partners, their families and/or relatives;
- may breach or cause to be breached, any direction given that relates to publicity, between a Notice of Election being issued and the date of that Election.
- in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer is or is likely to contravene a court order/direction or otherwise undermine the ability of the Council to discharge its legal duties and responsibilities;
- 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 policy/decisions of quasi judicial committees;
- is a statement and not a genuine question.

In addition, the person presiding at the Council meeting 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 person presiding at the Council meeting, as advised by the Head of Paid Service, on the matter, is final.

Copies of all questions will be circulated to all members of the Council with the summons and agenda for the meeting. The questions received and accepted shall be listed on the agenda in order of receipt.

The questioner will be asked to put their question or, if they are not present, the Head of Paid Service may put the question. No supplementary questions shall be allowed.



Every question shall be asked as set out on the agenda and answered without discussion. The person to whom it was put may, however, seek clarification as to its meaning. The person to whom the question has been asked may answer verbally, in writing, or may decline to answer it. In the event that a planned decision on the question subject matter is to be made, the question shall be referred to the appropriate body/committee for a response.

Any question that cannot be answered during public question time shall be dealt with by a written answer.

The Proper Officer will keep a record of each question submitted, which will be open to public inspection and retained for a period of 12 months. Details of all rejected questions will include the reasons for their rejection.

