1 **Purpose**
To establish a framework within which Public Question Time at Ordinary Council Meetings will be managed.

2 **Background**
The aim of Public Question Time is to provide an opportunity for the community to ask questions about Council issues, actions and decisions and/or to obtain timely information and answers to simple questions without the need for reports and correspondence.

3 **Scope**
This policy applies to the management of public questions received at Ordinary Council Meetings.

4 **Definitions**
- **Agenda** means the notice of the meeting setting out the business to be transacted at the meeting.
- **Chairperson** means the person who chairs a meeting of the Council or Special Committee of the Council and includes a person acting as Chief Executive Officer.
- **Council Meeting** includes an Ordinary Meeting and a Special Meeting of the Council.
- **Minutes** means the record of proceedings of a meeting of the Council or a Special Committee of the Council.

5 **Policy**

(a) Public Question Time will be included in each Ordinary Council Meeting. Provision is made at the beginning of the meeting for members of the public to ask questions related to:
   - i. items on the agenda of the Council Meeting
   - ii. any other matter within Council's responsibility that have been received in accordance with part (c) of this policy

   A supplementary Public Question Time will be included towards the end of the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions directly related to items on the agenda that have arisen during the meeting.

(b) Public Question Time will be managed by the Chairperson who will read out the question and the response. The Chairperson may authorise another person for this purpose.

(c) Questions must be in writing and be submitted by 12 noon on the day of the Council Meeting. Questions may be submitted online, by email, by post or hand delivered to the Council offices, but not via social media.

(d) Public questions received after 12 noon on the day of the Council Meeting will not be answered at the Council Meeting and responded to in writing by the appropriate Council officer, or referred to the next Ordinary Council Meeting for a public response if so requested by the submitter.
Public questions received during the Council Meeting that are not related to a specific agenda report at that meeting will be taken on notice and responded to in writing by the appropriate Council officer, or referred to the next Ordinary Council Meeting for a public response if so requested by the submitter.

(e) The person submitting the question is to be in the public gallery during Public Question Time. If the question is read out and answered at the meeting, the response will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the submitter is not present at the meeting, the question will not be read out, and a written response will be provided.

(f) In the event that a question is not able to be answered at the Council Meeting, a written response to the question will be provided.

(g) A maximum of three questions will be received from any person at any meeting.

(h) Members of the public are not permitted to enter into debate or any other discussion during Public Question Time, unless clarification is sought in relation to the question.

(i) A question may be refused if it is:
   • beyond Council’s power
   • repetitive or has already been answered
   • relates to a matter for which the meeting would normally be closed to the public in accordance with section 89(2) of the Local Government Act 1989
   • prejudicial to the Council or any other person if answered
   • about the personal views or actions of an individual Councillor or Council officer about a matter that is the subject of negotiation, litigation or of a commercial nature
   • defamatory, indecent, abusive or objectionable in language or substance

(j) Public Question Time is not a substitute for formal appeal and review systems, formal business procedures, formal Council decisions and any other legal processes required for the proper conduct of Council business.

6 Procedural Guidelines

(a) The Public Question Time will be included toward the start of the Council Meeting. This will give members of the public the opportunity to ask questions about matters that are included on the Council Meeting agenda.

   A supplementary Public Question Time will be included toward the end of the Council Meeting to give members of the public the opportunity to ask questions directly related to items on the agenda that may arise during the evening’s proceedings.

(b) Fifteen minutes will be provided for Public Question Time, however the Council may vary the time allocated depending on the business to be considered at the meeting.

(c) Individual responses to accepted questions shall not exceed two minutes.

(d) If a number of public questions are similar in nature Council may provide an aggregated response at the meeting.
7 Related Legislation

Local Government Act 1989

8 Further Information

Clause 102 of Council’s Meeting Procedure and Common Seal Local Law 2015.
For further information concerning this Policy please contact the Governance Department.

9 Document Control

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Version History

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