

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
25TH OCTOBER 2007

Public Participation At Meetings Of The Cabinet

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	Greater Learning and Participation
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Community Involvement
KEY PRIORITY	Local Democracy
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr John-Paul Campion
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Caroline Newlands, Head of Legal and Democratic Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Diana Glendenning, Senior Committee Officer, Tel. 01562-732763 Email: Diana.glendenning@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES	Appendix 1 Scheme for inclusion in the constitution

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider extending the public speaking scheme to cover Cabinet meetings as well as Full Council meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- 1. The public speaking scheme that is currently operational for Full Council be extended to cover Cabinet meetings as set out in Appendix 1 (attached).**
- 2. The Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 30th June 2004 the Council agreed a public speaking scheme for Full Council which enabled members of the public to present petitions and statements and ask questions at meetings of the full Council. This scheme has been operational for three years and it is now proposed to extend the scheme to Cabinet meetings.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Inclusiveness and raising the awareness of local of democracy is an important way for the Council to increase its profile with the electorate. Thereby the extension of the public speaking scheme will give members of the public an improved opportunity to express their views.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council's leaflet on public speaking at Council meetings will need to be reprinted to outline the extended arrangements to include Cabinet meetings. This can be met from existing budgets.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal or policy implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Extending the public speaking scheme to Cabinet meetings will promote democracy and inclusiveness and allows the electorate to have their say on issues that concern them.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Overview and Scrutiny (CL & CI) 20 April 2004
Recommendations from the Executive to Council 18 May 2004
Public Participation at Meetings of Full Council, 30 June 2004

10. CONSULTEES

CMT
Leader/Deputy Leader of the Council

10/10/07

Proposed Scheme for inclusion in Constitution**Wyre Forest District Council
Scheme For Public Speaking At Meetings Of Full Council/Cabinet*****HAVE YOUR SAY***

The Council wishes to encourage the public to take an interest in its affairs. The Council will give the public the opportunity to inform Councillors directly at meetings about things that concern them.

All issues raised by the public under this scheme will be given careful consideration.

While it will not be possible in every case to resolve an issue to the satisfaction of everyone, the Council is committed to a process that ensures the issue is considered fairly and openly.

What our Scheme Covers

The scheme enables members of the public to come to a Council/Cabinet meeting and make their views known by

- ◆ presenting a petition;
- ◆ making a statement that has relevance to what the meeting has power to do;
- ◆ tabling a question on matters where the Council and Cabinet has powers or duties or which affect the District

At the annual meeting of Council and at every ordinary meeting of Council/Cabinet up to 20 minutes will be devoted for public participation.

What The Scheme Does Not Cover

Some matters fall outside the scheme and will not therefore be accepted. These are: those matters that would require exempt or confidential information to be divulged in an answer;

- ◆ those matters that would require exempt or confidential information to be divulged in an answer.
- ◆ matters relating to applications for legal permissions or consents where there are alternative legal ways to challenge the decision or to appeal against it;
- ◆ matters which are already lodged with the Council, or with another statutory body (e.g. the Ombudsman) as a complaint
- ◆ allegations against, or comments about the conduct of individual councillors and officers.

Who May Use The Scheme?

The scheme is open to any resident of Wyre Forest of any age. This includes any homeless person or traveller currently within the Council area.

The scheme is available to employees of the Council provided the subject matter is related to their role as a private citizen. Representations about matters related to their employment are not permitted under this scheme, because alternative consultative routes are available to them in that capacity.

Petitions/Questions and Statements

Petitions

A petition may be presented in order to indicate local feeling . This may express a general view about a matter or refer to a specific issue about what the Council has or has not done.

There is no minimum number of signatures required. It is helpful if the identity of the petition organiser is made clear, for the purpose of feedback correspondence.

Advance notice of the petition should be lodged with the Committee Section no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting at which it is to be presented.

If the petitioners do not wish to present the petition themselves, a local councillor may be asked to present it or it may be submitted by post. In the latter case, the Committee Section will ensure it is acknowledged and directed appropriately within the council.

Questions

A question may be tabled for answer at the meeting.

Members of the public may table questions to the Council or the Cabinet as a whole or may address questions specifically to the Leader of the Council or to an individual Cabinet Member.

At meetings, questions may not be asked of an individual councillor who is neither the Leader nor a Cabinet Member.

Questions to the Leader of the Council may be about any aspect of Council policy and practice, service delivery or other matters of community interest or concern. It should be noted that in drawing together a response, the Leader will be entitled to consult a Cabinet Member or a Political Group Leader, and may nominate one or more such councillors to reply.

Questions to a Cabinet Member must be about a matter falling within their portfolio responsibilities.

Advance notice of the question should be lodged with the Committee Section no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting at which it is to be presented.

A question in multiple parts will be treated as a series of individual questions.

Statement

A statement may be presented at a meeting.

A statement may set out a point of view on a matter of general or specific interest relating to matters where the Council has powers and duties or which affect the District.

A copy of the statement should be lodged with the Committee Section no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting at which it is to be presented. It will be placed with the formal record of the meeting.

Advice on Submissions

The Committee Section is available to give advice to the public about the submission process and the most relevant meeting or person to consider it. Contact details are included at the end of this scheme.

Advice will be available to the Chairman of the meeting, the Leader of the Council or the Cabinet Member about the submission and how it might be dealt with.

At the Meeting

For a petition or statement, if the submission relates to a general matter not specifically on the agenda of the meeting, it will be taken at the start of the meeting.

If it relates to an agenda item, the person making the submission will be invited to address the meeting either at the start of the meeting or immediately before the item is debated at the discretion of the Chairman.

A period of 3 minutes will be allowed for the submission.

For a question, the written question will be circulated to members at the meeting and to the public gallery, together with a written answer, if there has been sufficient time allowed to prepare such an answer. The Chairman will draw attention to the document.

There is no requirement on the questioner to read out the question nor on anybody else to read out the answer.

If the question was not received in time for a written answer to be prepared and circulated, the questioner will be informed that a written reply will be given within 5 working days from the day after the day of the meeting.

The Chairman of the meeting will have a wide discretion to manage the process of public submissions in a manner which enables the business of the meeting to proceed effectively.

Help for the Public

The prospect of speaking at a formal meeting can be daunting! Every help and support will be offered to the public in exercising their rights under this scheme. This advice is available before the meeting or during the meeting.

Members will receive submissions with courtesy and respect.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Committee Section may be contacted by telephone on
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