

Appendix 1 - Monitoring Officer Report relating to motion on notice to vary Council Procedure Rule 11

1. It is common practice for Council Procedure Rules to provide a provision for members to ask questions on notice at a Full Council meeting. However, the specific rules in this area vary significantly across the sector – some examples are attached at Annex 1. This variation reflects a Council's autonomy to determine the procedures it wishes to apply to its meetings.
2. It is not uncommon for Councils to apply rules relating to one or more of the following:
 - time permitted for questions on notice at a council meeting,
 - number of questions on notice permitted per council meeting,
 - length of questions on notice and response times
3. The motion on notice submitted for the Council meeting on 12 January 2026 asked the Council to reduce the number of questions on notice which may be submitted to each Full Council meeting to one per member. Currently Boston Borough Council's Constitution does not place any limit on the number of questions on notice which may be asked by a member at a Full Council meeting. Members would continue to be able to ask one further supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. A copy of the Council's current questions by members procedure rules are attached at Annex 2 to this report.
4. Limiting the number of questions on notice can aid Council meetings to focus on business/decision making items so they do not override or dominate other business on the agenda. The disadvantage is that members are restricted by the number of questions that they are permitted to raise at a Full Council Meeting which are relevant to the work of the Council or affect the Borough.
5. In summarising it is lawful for a Council to limit the number of questions on notice which may be submitted by a member on notice to a Full Council meeting. Specific provisions in this regard vary significantly across the sector and it is for the Council to determine the rules which it wishes to adopt.

John Medler

Monitoring Officer

Annex 1 – Benchmarking examples

Shropshire Council : Questions from members have a word limit; Members can submit only 2 questions per meeting; lengthy multi-faceted questions or those with a long pre-amble will be rejected; Maximum of 5 questions per meeting – any excess are deferred to the next meeting.

Devon CC: limit of 3 Questions per member which must relate to strategic, policy or operational matters; If a member submits more than 1 question others will be put at the end of the schedule; max of 45 minutes allowed for questions and answers.

Oldham Council: Time limit of 2 minutes to ask a question.

Bolsover DC: Limit of 1 question per member plus one supplementary; Maximum limit of 15 minutes for questions and responses – any not reached within that time will be responded to in writing; questions must not amount to a statement or an attempt to debate and will be stopped by the Chair.

Hull City Council: Total of 40 minutes time; max of 2 minutes per question and 3 minutes per answer; supplementary questions are at discretion of Chair.

South Kesteven DC: Total time limit for questions from members is 45 minutes; 1 question per meeting; no statement, speech or debate permitted.

East Lindsey DC: No time limit or restriction on number of questions per meeting

City of Lincoln Council: 1 hour time limit for questions; written response for any outside of the time limit

Annex 2 – Boston Borough Council’s current Council Procedure Rule 11

11. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

11.1 On reports of the Cabinet or Committees and Panels

A Member of the Council may ask the Leader, a Cabinet Member or the Chairman of a Committee or Panel any question without notice upon an item of the report of the Cabinet or a Committee/Panel when that item is being received or under consideration by the Council.

11.2 Questions on Notice at full Council Subject to Rule 11.4, a Member of the Council may ask:

- The Mayor
- The Leader
- A Member of the Cabinet
- The Chairman of any Panel, Committee or SubCommittee

a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough.

11.3 Questions on Notice at Committees, Panels and Sub-Committees

Subject to Rule 11.4 a Member of a Panel, Committee or Sub-Committee may ask the Chairman of it a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the Borough and which falls within the terms of reference of that Panel, Committee or Sub-Committee.

11.4 Notice of Questions

A Member may only ask a question under Rule 11.2 or 11.3 where notice has been given in writing, or by electronic mail, to the Chief Executive at least two working days before the day of the meeting.

11.5 Response

Answers to questions submitted by Members are required to be made available to the questioner four working hours prior to the commencement time of the meeting. An answer to any question raised under Rules 11.2 and 11.3 may take the form of: (a) a direct oral answer; (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to the publication; or (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner and all Members of the Council or Committee (as the case may be).

11.6 Supplementary Question

A Member asking a question under Rule 11.2 or 11.3 may ask one supplementary question without notice of the Member to whom the first question was asked. The supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.