



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

# Neath Port Talbot Council Public Speaking Protocol

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- 1) A period of up to 15 minutes in each meeting shall be allowed for public questions commencing from the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022 and shall be reviewed by the Democratic Services Committee by the end of December 2022.
- 2) Any person (other than Members or employees of the Council) who resides or works in the locality of Neath Port Talbot may ask questions of Cabinet Members or of the chairpersons of committees of the Council at Ordinary Meetings of the Council and at Cabinet/Cabinet Boards.
- 3) A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the mailbox set up by the Democratic Services Manager for such purpose no later than 5pm, 2 Working Days before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must specify the person to whom it is to be put (by name or title).
- 4) Where the questioner indicates that they wish to ask their questions in the Welsh language, Welsh language translation will be sought for that particular question and answer. In the event that Welsh language translation is not available, then this will be discussed with the questioner and alternative arrangements will be considered/sought.
- 5) Where the questioner indicates any additional needs to enable the question to be put, Democratic Services officers shall liaise with the questioner to ensure all appropriate needs are capable of being met in the delivery of the questions. In the event that reasonable adjustments are not able to be made, alternative methods of delivery of the question will be considered with the questioner.
- 6) At any one meeting no person may submit more than one question and no more than one such question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.
- 7) The number of questions that an individual can ask in a municipal year shall be limited to two (to ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to attend such

meetings). In the event though that a person wishes to attend a meeting to ask a question over and above these two occasions, they shall be entitled to request it, provided their question is not rejected pursuant to clause 8 below.

- 8) The Chair may reject a question, provided they have consulted with the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Head of Democratic Services, (with the ruling of the Chair final) if it:
  - 9) is not related to matters for which the Council has a responsibility and which substantially affect the well-being of the administrative area of the Council and/or the citizens (or a significant group of them) of the Council.
  - 10) Comes from an individual who has been declared a vexatious complainant pursuant to the Council's Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.
  - 11) is in relation to matters which
    - (i) are defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
    - (ii) have been considered by the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy
    - (iii) require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or
    - (iv) relate to the personal circumstances or conduct of any officer and Member or conditions of service of employees;
    - (v) relate to an individual, particular group or business or the questioner's own particular circumstances;
    - (vi) which are ultra vires the Council or unlawful;
    - (vii) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting in the past six months;
    - (viii) relates to a matter which is the subject of legal or enforcement proceedings or an appeal to a court or tribunal or to a Government Minister or the Member of the Senedd or an investigation by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales;
    - (ix) relates to the activities and aims of a political party or organisation;

- (x) relates to a decision of the Planning/Licensing/Democratic Services or Standards Committee (including any sub-committees) or a matter which may result in a decision by one of the aforementioned committees;
  - (xi) is a statement or otherwise is not a genuine enquiry; or
  - (xii) would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time ,money or effort to prepare the answer
- 12) The Democratic Services Manager will make a record of each question received and a copy of the questions to be asked at a meeting will be open to public inspection and circulated to Members prior to the meeting. The questioner shall be given the opportunity to read their question orally.
  - 13) Questions will be asked in the order in which notice of them was received, except that the Chair may group together similar questions.
  - 14) If the questioner is absent or fails to identify themselves then the question will be deemed to be withdrawn or alternatively arrangements can be made with the local member for the issue to be raised on their behalf.
  - 15) A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must relate to the original question or the answer given and be limited to one minute. The Chair may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds set out above.
  - 16) No more than five minutes will be allowed for a response to any one question.
  - 17) Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or because of the nonattendance of the Member, to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer and a copy of the answer will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting
  - 18) An answer may take the form of:

- 19) an oral answer given by the person to whom the question is addressed or another person nominated by them;
- 20) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- 21) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to Members of the Council.
- 22) A person to whom a question is addressed may decline to answer provided that they state the reason for declining to answer.
- 23) The Chair shall have discretion to instruct that a composite answer may be given to any questions which are closely related or on the same subject matter, wherever he/she considers this appropriate. This shall not prejudice any right to ask a supplementary question, which may be available under the Council Procedure Rules/Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
- 24) A copy of the questions that are to be asked at a Cabinet/Cabinet Board shall be included on the Agenda item for the corresponding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.