

Appendix B: DRAFT Public Participation Protocol

This paper contains the protocol for enabling public participation in Full Council meetings. This sits behind Standing Orders which enable public speaking to be included in any Ordinary Full Council meeting and is made available on the Council's website or on request from the Governance and Councillor Liaison Team.

Submission of questions

Who

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Westminster is eligible to submit a question. In order to verify this, participants will be asked to include an address and postcode so that this can be checked – this data will be held in accordance with our data retention policies and destroyed when no longer required. If a Westminster postcode is not provided the submission is considered invalid.

All participants must attend the Full Council meeting, in person or (where unavoidable circumstances dictate) virtually, to present their question, slots are not able to be passed to others. In extreme circumstances where the participant is unable to attend at short notice e.g. due to illness, an option will be available for the question to be read out on their behalf by the Lord Mayor, but this is only in exceptional circumstances.

What

- Questions must be on the subject of local issues or relate to a Council function and be free from inflammatory language and other abusive or inappropriate language.
- Questions cannot relate to a specific person.
- These must be questions, and not statements.
- Submissions cannot be made by political parties.
- If an issue has already been raised or the questioner has previously asked a question in the last twelve months, it/they will not be accepted. A list of previous questions and questioners will be provided on the public participation page of the website.
- If there are a number of questions on the same topic, discussion will be encouraged between all those who have submitted a question to encourage only one question to be asked.
- The question presented MUST be the question asked, there will be no allowance for any change in wording, except in the event that circumstances have changed in the intervening period in which case the Lord Mayor may apply some discretion in the matter. Any requested deviations from the pre-submitted question should be shared with the Council in advance by emailing publicspeaking@westminster.gov.uk

Petitions – submission and discussion

The public participation slots are also available for a petition to be presented, based on the following guidelines, contained in the Council's Petition Scheme.

- If a petition reaches below 100 signatures it will receive a written response from the related Head of Service.
- If a petition reaches over 100 signatures it is eligible to be presented as part of the public participation item at the next Ordinary Full Council meeting after the petition closes.
- The Petitions Team will contact the petitioner once the petition closes to advise if it has met the threshold.

- Any petition presented at an Ordinary Full Council meeting will get an oral response, on the night, from the relevant Cabinet Member or Committee Chair, followed by a written response setting out what was said at the meeting and serving as the official response.
- If a petitioner does not want to present it publicly it will be sent to the relevant Cabinet Member for a written response

There will be no change to the item in the Petitions Scheme which relates to petitions which have 500 signatures, or over. This will continue to be sent to Cabinet for discussion but the option to present this at Full Council will also be available. In this case after the Cabinet discussion, either before or after the Full Council meeting, depending on dates, a written response from the Cabinet Member will be supplied.

How

All questions or requests to speak to a petition reaching the threshold will be submitted via an online form which will be sent, automatically, to a mailbox (publicspeaking@westminster.gov.uk). This email address can also be used for any questions about the process. However, a question or request for speaking to a petition will only be accepted for presentation at Full Council if submitted via the form.

The form will be hosted on an appropriate page on the Council's website.

The form will include the following information: name, address (must be in Westminster); contact number; contact email address; question or precis of the petition submitted (up to 250 words) and any accessibility issues in attending Council House.

Questions may only be submitted within a set window in advance of a Full Council meeting. This window opens 14 days before the meeting takes place and closes seven days before the meeting takes place.

Slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis taking into account the 'what' guidelines above and filling the number of anticipated slots at any given meeting.

The Governance and Councillor Liaison team will ask all questioners to confirm their attendance at the meeting 48 hours in advance, if attendance is not confirmed by 24 hours in advance of the meeting, the place may be offered to someone on the waiting list.

Implementation of public participation item at Ordinary Full Council meetings

Management of the item

30 minutes will be made available for the item.

Each questioner will have up to two minutes to ask their question or present their petition and the relevant Cabinet Member/Committee Chair will have up to two minutes to respond.

The question presented MUST be the question asked, there will be no allowance for any change in wording. The Lord Mayor has the right to stop any question which is not as listed.

For the presentation of a petition the two minutes must be used to explain the subject of the petition only, nothing else, even if it is considered a related matter. The Lord Mayor has the right to stop any speech on a topic which is not considered relative to the petition presented.