

## **Public Participation at Meetings of the Fire Authority and its Committees**

The Fire Authority has agreed that members of the public may participate in its meetings, if they follow the procedures, set out in its Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business. The relevant extract from those Standing Orders (Standing Order 14) is given below.

### **STANDING ORDER 14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS**

#### **Questions, Statements and Petitions**

- 1 Provision shall be made on the public part of the Agenda of each ordinary and, at the Chair's absolute discretion, special meetings of the Authority, of the Finance and Performance Management (now replaced by the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Audit and Performance Management Committee), of the Personnel (renamed the Human Resources) Committee, of the Standards Committee, and of the Health Panel for members of the public ('a person') to participate in accordance with the rules below.
- 2 For the purposes of this standing order, a person shall include any elector living within Shropshire and any other party with interests within Shropshire. It will exclude any employee of the Authority in relation to any matter connected with their employment; any representative of an employee or group of employees; any person in a contractual relationship with the Authority in relation to any matter connected with that contract; any elected member of any local authority on a matter concerning that local authority or (unless the Chair determines otherwise) any person appointed or engaged to speak on behalf of another.
- 3 Written, facsimile or e-mail notice of questions, statements or petitions must be given to the Clerk by 5pm three clear working days before the relevant meeting.
- 4 Normally, a maximum of three matters will be received and the total period of public participation may be up to 10 minutes. If notice is received of more than three matters to be raised at the same meeting, matters discussed will be at the discretion of the Chair. Matters shall only be permitted if they relate to an item on the Agenda, and will be taken at the relevant time. No questions, which seek any information of a personal nature or confidential information, shall be answered.
- 5 No person shall be permitted to ask more than one question at any meeting and it shall be in the absolute discretion of the Chair to decide whether a person has in fact asked more than one question on any given occasion.
- 6 The Chair shall be entitled to refuse to allow a question to be put to the meeting, if, in the Chair's opinion, that question has previously been asked and answered and there has been no subsequent change in circumstances. The Chair shall advise Members in general terms of such a refusal.
- 7 A person submitting a question after three questions have already been received from other persons shall be offered the option of a written reply. The opportunity to discuss more than three items remains at the discretion of the Chair.

- 8 A person may address the Authority or committee with regard to questions, statements or petitions him/herself for a period not exceeding three minutes and the remarks shall relate only to the issues in respect of which notice has been given. The Chair shall have discretion to extend the participation period at the expiry of the 10-minute period to allow completion of the question in progress or to terminate the participation period prior to the expiry of the 10-minute period.
- 9 Any question shall be directed at the Chair who may reply orally at the meeting or in writing following the meeting or who may decline to reply. A reason for declining to reply must be given. The Chair may ask another Member of the Authority or committee or an officer to reply on his behalf.
- 10 The Chair shall, without response, receive any petition although the person presenting a petition of 10 or more signatures may speak to it.
- 11 Where a group is raising a question or making a statement at the meeting a representative must be nominated to speak on behalf of the group at the meeting.
- 12 No response need be made to statements but Members of the Authority or committee can allude to them in the course of the consideration of the relevant item on the agenda.
- 13 With the express permission of the Chair and within the overall time allowed, a supplementary question from the member of the public or spokesperson may be permitted and Members of the Authority or committee may put questions to the member of the public.
- 14 In accordance with Standing Order 32, the Chair's ruling on the construction or application of this Standing Order shall be final and not open to debate or challenge.

**Authority and Committee Agenda and Reports**

- 15 So far as is practicable, relevant Authority and committee agenda and reports will be given to all persons attending the meeting.

**Disturbance by Members of the Public**

- 16 The Chair shall warn a member of the public who interrupts the proceedings at any meeting. If the interruption continues, the Chair may order that person's removal from the meeting room. In case of general disturbances in any part of the meeting room open to the public the Chair may order that part to be cleared.

If you require any advice on this issue, please contact either:

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