

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

14 MARCH 2006

ITEM 4(b)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNCIL'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS – KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

I had made a few notes regarding the public participation/ area forums, item 6, Would you please pass them on to the meeting?

Area forums:

I think it's too soon to make any formal interim recommendations...we should wait at least until the first round of pilot forum meetings. However that doesn't stop us keeping a note of what does/ doesn't work well in other areas...if we've seen something that works well why not suggest it is taken on board by the pilots?

Public participation at committee meetings:

From our last discussion I would agree with Cllr Culshaw's suggestion that we make some interim recommendations regarding public participation at meetings. My suggestion would be:

Introduce public speaking within limits at some meetings, to start as soon as possible, and to be reviewed after 6 months. Then we can assess at first hand how it's working. After the review, we can make further recommendations to amend the system or roll out to more meetings, as appropriate.

at DC Committee:

Allow public speaking regarding Planning Applications only.

Allow maximum one speaker for and one against the officer's recommendation on each Planning Application.

If there's only one "side" present, still allow them to speak anyway.

If there are several people wanting to speak, allow them a short time to confer and elect a spokesperson.

Have the public speaker(s) before the councillors' debate starts for each application.

Allow 5 minutes per speech.

Maybe if the Panel is minded to recommend something similar, we should consult DC Cttee for comments.

at all O&S and Scrutiny Panel meetings:

Allow public participation in every meeting, related to agenda items only.

Allow at least one speaker per each side of an argument, up to any number of people to speak, at the Chair's discretion.

5 minute limit to a speech.

At Full Council:

Have up to 30 minutes "Question Time" at the start of each meeting.

Members of the public can ask questions of any member of the Council.

If people have forwarded their question 48 hours in advance, they should get an answer on the night, and be able to ask a supplementary question on the same subject.

Or someone can turn up on the night and ask a question out of the blue, in which case the question may be answered there and then if possible, or deferred to be answered in writing, and the answer reported to next Full Council.
Some questions may be completely out of the Council's remit or be deemed malicious etc and could be ruled out of order at the mayor's discretion.

This could potentially make Full Council more interesting...

Councillor L Brownlee