

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive (Introduced by the Executive Member for Customer, Democratic and Legal Services, Councillor J Walker)	Executive Cabinet	24/08/06

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS/SPEAKING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS - RECOMMENDATIONS

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To set out recommendations for public speaking at Council meetings.

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- Opening up Council meetings to public speaking will help to address the Council's corporate priority of 'Ensuring Chorley Borough Council is a performing organisation'.

### RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	4	Information	4
Reputation	4	Regulatory/Legal	
Financial		Operational	
People	4	Other	

Risks have been evaluated in full.

### BACKGROUND

- At its meeting on 14 March 2006 the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel put forward a number of recommendations in relation to public questions/speaking at Council meetings. Considerable research went into these recommendations including visits to a number of other councils to observe how public speaking works in practice.
- In addition the Development Control Committee has considered the recommendations in full at its meeting on 23 May 2006. The Committee supported the recommendations subject to the preparation and implementation of appropriate procedure rules to regulate the public participation in meetings.
- This report builds on work on this subject that has been undertaken to date and sets out the recommendations in detail.



## **PUBLICITY**

7. Leaflets will be produced to publicise the opportunity for members of the public to submit questions/speak at appropriate meetings and general publicity will be given through the local media and the Council's newspaper. An on-line form will also be provided on the Council's web-site to enable members of the public to submit questions electronically if they so wish.

## **PUBLIC ADDRESS/LOOP SYSTEM**

8. The provision of a PA/loop system in the Council Chamber/Committee Room in the Town Hall to meet disability discrimination requirements will need to be investigated by Officers and a further report submitted to the Executive Cabinet.

## **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

9. We will need to take into consideration any training needs required by elected members, or officers who may face questions from either members of the public or elected members.

## **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

10. There are two aspects of potential cost associated with the report. The first relates to the provision of the Loop system which will have both capital and revenue implications. The Council's budget includes provision for capital works to its buildings and I would look initially to fund any scheme from this allocation once the costs are known, but it would mean another potential scheme being deferred. Virement would be sought from current cash budgets for any ongoing costs of the Loop system so that there is no net increase in the Council's budget. The other revenue costs associated with the implementation are for publicity costs which will be funded from current cash budgets.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

11. That the Executive Cabinet be requested to submit a recommendation to the next meeting of the Council on 19 September 2006 that the following text be added to the Council Procedure Rules set out in Part A, Appendix 3 of the Council's Constitution, to allow public questions/speaking at the appropriate meetings. In accordance with Paragraph 27.2 of the Council Procedure Rules, the recommendation will stand adjourned without further discussion to the next Ordinary Council meeting to be held on 31 October 2006.

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS/SPEAKING**

### **(1) Council and Executive Cabinet Meetings**

- A maximum period of 3 minutes will be allowed for a question from a member of the public on an item on the agenda. A maximum period of 30 minutes to be allocated for public questions if necessary at each ordinary Council meeting (ie excluding the Annual Meeting).
- Questions should be submitted to the Democratic Services Section by midday, two working days prior to each Council meeting to allow time to prepare appropriate responses and investigate the issue if necessary.
- The question to be answered by the Executive Member with responsibility for the service area or whoever is most appropriate.
- On receiving a reply the member of the public will be allowed to ask one supplementary question.

- Members of the public will be able to stay for the rest of the meeting should they so wish but will not be able to speak on any other agenda item upon using their allocated 3 minutes.

**(2) Development Control Committee**

- One person to be allowed to address the Committee in favour of the officers recommendations on respective planning applications and one person to be allowed to speak against the officer's recommendations.
- Persons must give notice of their wish to address the Committee, to the Democratic Services Section by no later than midday, two working days before the day of the meeting.
- In the event of several people wishing to speak either in favour or against the recommendation, the respective group/s be requested to select one spokesperson to address the Committee.
- If a person wishes to speak either in favour or against an application without anyone wishing to present an opposing argument that person be allowed to address the Committee.
- Each person/group addressing the Committee be allowed a maximum of three minutes to speak.
- The Committees debate and consideration of the planning applications awaiting decision will only commence after all of the public addresses.

**(3) Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Panels**

- A maximum period of 3 minutes will be allowed for a question from a member of the public on an item on the agenda. A maximum period of 30 minutes to be allocated for public questions if necessary at each meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its appropriate panels. This will provide an opportunity for members of the public to raise and ask questions on any issue falling within the remit of the Committee or panel.
- Questions must be submitted to the Democratic Services Section by no later than midday, two working days before the day of the meeting to allow time to prepare appropriate responses and investigate issues if necessary.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

12. The introduction of Public Speaking/Questions at various Council meetings will improve the level of public participation in the Council's decision making process.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

13. None.

DONNA HALL  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

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