

15. OPPOSITION BUSINESS

- 15.1 The Council will, at four meetings a year, give time on its agenda to issues raised by the Official Opposition Party (second largest party). This will be at the first normal business meeting (in May /June), and then the third (September), fifth (January) and seventh (March) meetings (unless otherwise agreed between the political parties). A minimum of 45 minutes will be set aside at each of the four meetings.
- 15.2 All Council meetings will also provide opportunities for all parties and individual councillors to raise issues either through Question Time, motions or through policy and other debates.
- 15.3 The procedure for the submission and processing of such business is as follows:
- (a) The second largest party shall submit to the Monitoring Officer a topic for discussion no later than 21 calendar days prior to the Council meeting. This is to enable the topic to be fed into the Council agenda planning process and included in the public notice placed in the local press, Council publications, plus other outlets such as the Council's web site.
 - (b) The Monitoring Officer will notify the Mayor, Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the relevant Corporate Management Board member(s) of the selected topic(s).
 - (c) Opposition business must relate to the business of the Council, or be in the interests of the local community generally.
 - (d) If requested, briefings on the specific topic(s) identified will be available to the second largest party from the relevant Corporate Management Board member(s) before the Council meeting.
 - (e) No later than 9 calendar days (deadline time 9.00 am) prior to the meeting, the second largest party must provide the Monitoring Officer with an issues paper for inclusion within the Council agenda. This paper should set out the purpose of the business and any recommendations for consideration by Council. The order in which the business will be placed on the agenda will be in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.2 relating to the order of business at Council meetings.
 - (f) That Party Leaders meet before each Council meeting at which Opposition Business was to be discussed, to agree how that debate will be managed at the Council meeting.
 - (g) The discussion will be subject to the usual rules of debate for Council meetings, except as set out below. The Opposition Business will be conducted as follows:

- (i) The debate will be opened by the Leader of the Opposition (or nominated representative) who may speak for no more than 10 minutes.
- (ii) A nominated councillor of the Majority Group will be given the opportunity to respond, again taking no more than 10 minutes.
- (iii) The Mayor will then open the discussion to the remainder of the Council. Each councillor may speak for no more than 5 minutes but, with the agreement of the Mayor, may do so more than once in the debate.
- (iv) At the discretion of the Mayor the debate may take different forms including presentations by councillors, officers or speakers at the invitation of the second largest party.
- (v) Where officers are required to make a presentation this shall be confined to background, factual or professional information. All such requests for officer involvement should be made through the Chief Executive or the relevant Director.
- (vi) The issue paper should contain details of any specific actions or recommendations being put forward for consideration as an outcome of the debate on Opposition Business.
- (vii) Amendments to the recommendations within the Opposition Business paper may be proposed by the Opposition Group. They must be seconded. The Opposition will state whether the amendment(s) is/are to replace the recommendations within the paper or be an addition to them.
- (viii) Before the Majority party concludes the debate, the Leader of the Opposition will be allowed no more than 5 minutes to sum up the discussion.
- (ix) The Majority Group will then be given the opportunity to say if, and how, the matter will be progressed.
- (x) If requested by the Leader of the Opposition or a nominated representative, a vote will be taken on whether to approve the Majority Group's response.