

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

9 October 2017

ORAL QUESTIONS AT FULL COUNCIL

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the full Council meeting on 13 September 2017, it was requested that the current arrangements for the asking of oral questions by members of the public at meetings of the full Council be reviewed.
- 1.2 The current arrangements are determined under Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, under section 9, Procedural Standing Orders:

9 *Questions from the Public*

- 9.1 *At each ordinary meeting of the full Council (excluding the first annual meeting of the new Council) there shall be up to 30 minutes set aside for written and oral questions from the public.*
- 9.2 *An oral question under this Procedural Standing Order may be asked with the consent of the Chairperson and within the 30 minutes set aside for written and oral questions under provision 9.1 providing that he or she gives notice of the question to the Chief Executive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.*

2 Arrangements at other Local Authorities

- 2.1 Research was carried out into the constitutional arrangements for the asking of oral questions by members of the public at full Council meetings at the six district councils within the County. The arrangements at Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire county councils were also considered.
- 2.2 All the district councils within the County allow for written questions from the public to be asked at their full Council meetings. Four of the districts clearly specify in their constitutions the deadlines for receipt of written notification of these questions ahead of the meeting, in addition to determining the arrangements for the asking of supplementary questions. None of the district council constitutions detail any arrangements for the asking of oral questions by members of the public.
- 2.3 Out of the four County Councils considered, only the constitution for Worcestershire County Council determines any arrangement for the asking of oral questions. This can be found under Part 2, Procedural Standing Orders, section 15.4 (c), where it states:

In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman may permit an oral question to be asked at the meeting without notice.

- 2.4 The constitutions for Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire county councils specify that a question may only be asked if clear written notice is given ahead of the full Council meeting. Arrangements at Herefordshire and Oxfordshire county councils allow for one supplementary question to be given without notice to the member who replied to the original question.

3 Next Steps

The Committee is asked to note the findings of the research and to consider the next steps.