

**GREATER CAMBRIDGE CITY DEAL MODIFICATION TO THE JOINT ASSEMBLY
AND EXECUTIVE BOARD STANDING ORDERS TO IMPROVE THE HANDLING OF
PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

To: **Constitution & Ethics Committee**

Meeting Date: **24th November 2016**

From: **Executive Director – Economy, Transport and
Environment**

Electoral division(s): **All Divisions in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire**

Forward Plan ref: *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To outline proposed modified Standing Orders for the
Greater Cambridge City Deal Joint Assembly and
Executive Board prior to reporting to Full Council.**

Recommendation: **That the Committee recommend to Council that**

**the Standing Orders for the Greater Cambridge City
Deal Joint Assembly and Executive Board be modified
in accordance with the draft Standing Orders as set
out at report Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 For both the City Deal Joint Assembly and Executive Board, agendas and reports are currently published five clear working days before the relevant meeting. Each Executive Board meeting also considers a forward plan, which gives advance notice of decisions that are expected to be taken.
- 1.2 The existing Standing Orders for both Committees require notice to be given of public questions by 10am the day before the relevant meeting. Responses are then prepared by officers where appropriate, in order to advise Joint Assembly and Executive Board members on responding to questions in the meeting. Meetings of both Committees have historically taken a larger number of questions than is the case with other Committees of the three partner Councils – the June 2016 Executive Board had 32 public questions.
- 1.3 Responses to public questions are currently published in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- 1.4 Alongside the Joint Assembly and Executive Board, there are other forums through which members of the public can effectively engage with and ask questions to the City Deal. Where the infrastructure programme is concerned, questions can be asked at Local Liaison Forums, which have been established to allow local Members and the public in areas directly affected by schemes to engage with the detailed proposals and to keep informed of plans. These are useful forums for questions to be directed where they relate to specific schemes, and are able to provide detailed responses. Officers are also available to answer questions across the City Deal programme if contacted, with the City Deal email address being the most obvious channel for queries.
- 1.5 Similar reports to this one are being considered by the relevant Committees at Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, as any changes to the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders for these Committees requires approval from all three Councils. Proposed modifications are shown in the two Appendices with tracked changes. All three Councils will need to agree the changes as proposed in order for them to take effect.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Members of the public, officers and Members all consider that the current turnaround time of just over one day allowed between receipt of public questions and the relevant meeting means that often detailed and technical questions are not always answered sufficiently. The proposed modifications to the Standing Orders of both committees are intended to give officers more time to advise Joint Assembly and Executive Board members on the issues involved in those public questions, and therefore to improve the quality of responses given at the meetings, while ensuring the public have the same length of time to prepare their questions.

- 2.2 Increasing the time allowed for preparation of responses as proposed would also allow for questions and responses to be more effectively published, including where questions are not fully answered in the relevant meetings, so responses would be more easily accessible. This would also facilitate an aspiration to publish written responses to some questions where possible in advance of the relevant meeting, where those questions are of a technical nature.
- 2.3 By bringing forward both the deadline for receipt of public questions and the publication period for agendas and reports, the proposed modifications would retain the existing time period between publication of agendas and the deadline for submitting questions. It should be noted that this would mean reports needing to be completed 2-3 days earlier than is currently the case, although with effective work planning that should not be problematic.
- 2.4 If the three Councils choose not to support the recommendations, the existing Standing Orders would continue to be in force.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. Implications

4.1. Resource

There are no implications.

4.2. Equality and diversity

There are no implications.

4.3. Engagement and consultation

The proposed changes have arisen from a proactive proposal by key stakeholders to improve the functioning of public questions at City Deal meetings.

The proposed changes have been discussed with members of the City Deal Executive Board and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the City Deal Joint Assembly.

4.4. Statutory, risk and legal

There are no implications.

4.5. Localism and local Member involvement

The proposed modifications to the Standing Orders of both Committees would allow for more effective and productive involvement of local Members and the public in City Deal meetings.

4.6. Public health

There are no implications.

Appendix 1: Proposed modifications to Joint Assembly Standing orders

Relevant extracts

7. Notice of and summons to meetings

- 7.1 Notice will be given to the public of the time and place of any meeting of the Joint Assembly in accordance with the Access to Information rules of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 7.2 At least five clear working days before a meeting, a copy of the agenda and associated papers will be sent to every member of the Joint Assembly. Other than in exceptional circumstances this will take place one week before the deadline for submission of public questions. The agenda will give the date, time and place of each meeting and specify the business to be transacted, and will be accompanied by such details as are available.

11. Questions by the public and public speaking

At the discretion of the Chairman, members of the public may ask questions at meetings of the Joint Assembly. This standard protocol is to be observed by public speakers:

- (a) notice of the question should be given to the Democratic Services team at South Cambridgeshire District Council (as administering authority) by 10am the day at least three working days before the meeting;
- (b) questions should be limited to a maximum of 300 words;
- (b) questioners will not be permitted to raise the competence or performance of a member, officer or representative of any partner on the Joint Assembly, nor any matter involving exempt information (normally considered as 'confidential');
- (c) questioners cannot make any abusive or defamatory comments;
- (d) if any clarification of what the questioner has said is required, the Chairman will have the discretion to allow other Assembly members to ask questions;
- (e) the questioner will not be permitted to participate in any subsequent discussion and will not be entitled to vote;
- (f) the Chairman will decide when and what time will be set aside for questions depending on the amount of business on the agenda for the meeting. Normally questions will be received as the first substantive item of the meeting;
- (g) individual questioners will be permitted to speak for a maximum of three minutes;
- (h) in the event of questions considered by the Chairman as duplicating one another, it may be necessary for a spokesperson to be nominated to put forward the question on behalf of other questioners. If a spokesperson cannot be nominated or agreed, the questioner of the first such question received will be entitled to put forward their question.
- (i) questions should relate to items that are on the agenda for discussion at the meeting in question. The Chairman will have the discretion to allow questions to be asked on other issues if it is a pressing issue.

Appendix 2: Proposed modifications to Executive Board Standing Orders

Relevant extracts

7. Notice of and summons to meetings

- 7.1 Notice will be given to the public of the time and place of any meeting of the Executive Board in accordance with the Access to Information rules of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 7.2 At least five clear working days before a meeting, a copy of the agenda and associated papers will be sent to every member of the Executive Board. Other than in exceptional circumstances this will take place one week before the deadline for submission of public questions. The agenda will give the date, time and place of each meeting and specify the business to be transacted, and will be accompanied by such details as are available.

11. Questions by the public and public speaking

At the discretion of the Chairman, members of the public may ask questions at meetings of the Executive Board. This standard protocol is to be observed by public speakers:

- (a) notice of the question should be given to the Democratic Services team at South Cambridgeshire District Council (as administering authority) by 10am the day at least three working days before the meeting;
- (b) questions should be limited to a maximum of 300 words;
- (b) questioners will not be permitted to raise the competence or performance of a member, officer or representative of any partner on the Executive Board, nor any matter involving exempt information (normally considered as 'confidential');
- (c) questioners cannot make any abusive or defamatory comments;
- (d) if any clarification of what the questioner has said is required, the Chairman will have the discretion to allow other Board members to ask questions;
- (e) the questioner will not be permitted to participate in any subsequent discussion and will not be entitled to vote;
- (f) the Chairman will decide when and what time will be set aside for questions depending on the amount of business on the agenda for the meeting. Normally questions will be received as the first substantive item of the meeting;
- (g) individual questioners will be permitted to speak for a maximum of three minutes;
- (h) in the event of questions considered by the Chairman as duplicating one another, it may be necessary for a spokesperson to be nominated to put forward the question on behalf of other questioners. If a spokesperson cannot be nominated or agreed, the questioner of the first such question received will be entitled to put forward their question.
- (i) questions should relate to items that are on the agenda for discussion at the meeting in question. The Chairman will have the discretion to allow questions to be asked on other issues if it is a pressing issue.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Report authors should evaluate significant implications using the questions detailed in the table below. Each specific implication must be signed off by the relevant Team within the Council before the report is submitted to Democratic Services.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood
Has the impact on Statutory, Legal and Risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Are there any Equality and Diversity implications?	Yes Name of Officer: Tamar Oviatt-Ham
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Mark Miller
Are there any Localism and Local Member involvement issues?	Yes Name of Officer: Paul Tadd
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

Source Documents	Location
County Council Constitution Part 3C – Joint Committees	http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20050/council_structure/288/councils_constitution