

DOCUMENT TYPE	Policy
TITLE	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
NUMBER:	POL-1008

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clearly state Council's management of Public Question Time.

Public Question Time is a means by which the public can seek responses from Council about issues affecting the local government that are of concern to them. It assists the public to be better informed about the governing of their district, and it provides the local government with a mechanism to identify issues of importance in their community.

DEFINITIONS

Public Question Time: As required under *Section 5.24 of the Local Government Act 1995* and the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, time must be provided at Council and committee meetings with delegated powers for members of the public to ask questions and receive responses.

Question: A question is a sentence worded or expressed so as to elicit information, it is not a Statement.

Statement: A statement is a single sentence or assertion setting forth facts or particulars. It is not a question.

The **Act** refers to the *Local Government Act 1995*

POLICY STATEMENTS

Public Question Time is early in the meeting as required by the Act. This allows questions to be asked before business is dealt with and also smooth running of the business part of the meeting. The procedure for asking questions is outlined below.

- Priority will be given to those questions relating to a matter on the Agenda before the meeting. Other questions will only be addressed if time permits.
- The length of each question, including any background information, must not exceed 150 words.
- Questions are limited to two (2) per person, and with a total time limit of two (2) minutes per question. Multiple parts to a question are considered separate questions.
- Questions must be regarding issues pertaining to the Shire.
- Questions regarding personal affairs, opinions, information or perceptions not relating directly to Shire business will be refused.

- No late documentation or item is to be brought into the meeting for distribution without prior arrangement with the CEO.

PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Presenting a Question

Questions should be:

- a) filled out on form *FMT-1027 Public Question Time* or provided on paper addressed to the Presiding Member (not any other person) submitted in writing to the Chief Executive Officer by email to mail@swek.wa.gov.au or in person prior to commencement of the meeting.
- b) Duplicated – so you have your own copy of the question/s to be read aloud at the meeting.
- c) Those asking questions are to move to the lectern and state their name, address and the item number to which they are referring, and then read the question.

2. Managing the Questions

- a) The CEO should compile same or similar questions submitted with notice, and provide a single response.
- b) Where questions are submitted with sufficient notice, the Administration will prepare and provide an informed response at the meeting.
- c) Where questions are submitted without sufficient notice, the Administration will answer them at the meeting where possible. If further information is required, the question will be taken on notice, and a written response will be provided to the person and included in the minutes of the next Council meeting.
- d) A timer may be used to monitor each person's question time, and the Presiding Member will require the speaker to conclude after two (2) minutes.
- e) Questions without notice or multiple parts to a question will be answered in the order they are asked to a maximum of two (2).
- f) Should time permit, after all present have had an opportunity to ask a question, additional questions may be considered.
- g) If a question raises a significant issue not covered in an officer's report or cannot be fully answered, the Presiding Member may decide to defer the item or refer it for further consideration, taking into account any statutory deadlines or other relevant factors

3. Responding to the Questions

- a) The order in which questions are to be addressed is:
 - i) questions with notice relating to matters within that meeting's agenda;
 - ii) questions with notice relating to other matters;
 - iii) questions without notice relating to matters within that meeting's agenda;
 - iv) questions without notice relating to other matters.
- b) Matters considered confidential under section 5.23 of the Act will not be addressed other than to advise of such.
- c) Written questions submitted by a person who is not present at the meeting will be read into the record and answered at that meeting where possible.
- d) If further information is required to provide an informed answer, the question will be taken on notice, and a written response will be provided to the person and included in the minutes of the next Council meeting.
- e) Responses will be provided in as much detail as time permits, to allow as many questions as possible to be addressed. If further information is required, it may be requested from the Shire after the meeting.

- f) The provision of an answer concludes the matter. Neither the Council nor the Administration will debate or discuss the question with the questioner. Discussion or debate with Elected Members, Shire Officers, or within the gallery is not permitted.

Please Note: No action should be taken by members of the public on any item discussed at a Council meeting until written confirmation of the Council's resolution has been received.

DOCUMENT AND VERSION CONTROL

Responsible Directorate		Governance	
Responsible Officer		Executive Officer to the CEO	
Statutory References		Local Government Act 1995 – Section 5.24 Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 r5, 6 & 7 Meeting Procedures Local Law 2016 cl 6.7	
Related Documents		FMT-1027 Public Question Time	
Amendment History (Adoption and last 3 amendments)			
Version	Date Issued - Resolution Number	Item #	Description of Change
1.0	25/10/2016 – 11524	12.2.5	Council Adoption
2.0	26/03/2019 – 115954	12.2.4	Review Adopted by Council
2.1	01/11/2023 – CEO013	--	Reference Updates as per POL-1014 Policy Management (previously CP/GOV-3105)
3.0	TBA	TBA	In Draft
Date of Next Review		November 2027	