

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

7 DECEMBER 2012

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF LAW AND DEMOCRACY

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AT PANEL MEETINGS

SUMMARY

This report presents options regarding opportunities for the public to ask questions at meetings of the Panel.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members consider the options detailed below.

DETAIL

1. The Panel's current Rules of Procedure provide that the public will be able to speak and ask questions at Panel meetings, under the direction of the Chair. However, such questions would need to relate to the business identified on the agenda and under discussion at the time the member of the public spoke.
2. It has been suggested that the Panel should consider introducing a system that would allow Members of the public to ask questions on issues not necessarily detailed on the agenda but within the remit of the Panel, or in connection with the work of the Commissioner. Potential Options are detailed below
3. Option 1 – Leave things as they are:-

As referred to in paragraph 1 above, the Panel's current Rules of Procedure state:

Members of the public will be able to speak and ask questions at meetings of the Panel under the direction of the Chair, save where exempt or confidential information is to be discussed and the public are excluded from the meeting either for the whole or part of the business in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, or any provision of the Act or related legislation

4. Option 2 – Retain the principle of Option 1 but include a facility which would allow members of the public to submit questions on notice. An item would be placed on each ordinary meeting's agenda, which would deal with any valid public questions.

Many members will be familiar with provisions within their own Council's procedure rules, which allow for members of the public to ask questions at

meetings of Full Council. An example of how this might work in terms of the Panel's procedure rules is identified at the **appendix**.

This would allow questions about issues, not necessarily detailed on the agenda, but would provide a process allowing the Panel to deal with questions in a structured way, whilst providing the questioner with full, considered responses.

5. Option 3 – Retain the principle of Option 1 but include an item, on each ordinary meeting agenda, allocating a period of time, say 15 minutes, during which the public could ask questions without notice.

This approach is often adopted by Parish Councils and allows the public to attend meetings and raise issues. However, any questions asked, without notice, may not be appropriate for the Panel to respond to. In addition it will not have been possible to consider the question and to undertake any research to assist with a response.

6. The options described above provide a guide to some of the types of process that exist relating to members of the public asking questions at meetings. Within each option, members may wish to give further consideration to variables such as the length of time allocated to question time and each question, the notice period for questions, any supplementary questions, number of questions etc.

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