



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**

**13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021**

#### **REVIEW OF MEMBER'S QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

#### **JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES & SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide members with the opportunity to review the arrangements introduced in May 2019 in respect of 'Members Question on Notice' at full Council meetings and to ensure these arrangements are still fit for purpose.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider and review the question arrangements adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the Council in 2019 as outlined within the report;
- 2.2 Consider the questions posed in 5.9 of the report.
- 2.3 Determine whether to propose any recommendations in respect of the current arrangements of Questions on Notice to the twenty sixth Annual Council Meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide the opportunity for members to review the Members Question on Notice arrangements introduced in 2019 and determine whether they have improved the opportunity for non-executive members questions to be considered as part of a full council meeting.
- 3.2 To allow the opportunity for this committee to make any recommendations or proposals for amendment or their endorsement which would see the continuation or otherwise of the arrangements adopted by the Council in 2019.

## 4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the Council meeting on the [10<sup>th</sup> April 2019](#), when considering a Notice of Motion (Minute 144 refers) Members discussed increasing the number of questions permitted to be asked from 5 to 8. Members also discussed the proposal of replacing the rule which specifies a specific number of questions that can be asked with a rule specifying an allotted amount of time within which questions can be asked.
- 4.2 Although the Notice of Motion was not adopted Members suggested that the content be brought before the Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee in respect of developing proposals that could be taken forward.
- 4.3 At the meeting of the Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee on the [2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019](#), Members supported the proposal to introduce a new arrangement to take forward Members questions at Council Meetings, which was subsequently adopted at the twenty fourth Council AGM on the [15<sup>th</sup> May 2019](#). This arrangement sought to increase the number of questions considered as part of full council meetings.
- 4.4 The new arrangements introduced a twenty-minute period for questions to be considered at the meeting, which included the opportunity for a supplementary question to be asked, in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules. As part of the new arrangements a ballot was to be undertaken for each meeting to establish the running order of the questions. Prior to the changes, the previous arrangements facilitated a maximum of five non-executive member questions at each ordinary Council meeting.
- 4.5 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.2 a Member of the Council may ask:
- The Mayor of the Council
  - A Member of the Executive
  - The Chair of any Committee or Sub Committee
- A question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 4.6 Following consideration of the proposal to introduce a twenty-minute question time at the Council's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2019, members determined to review this arrangement after a twelve month period. It was considered as part of the debate on this matter that the review would determine whether or not, greater opportunity had been afforded for non- executive members questions to be considered as a result of the new arrangement.
- 4.7 A review of the new arrangement was scheduled within the Council Work Programme 2019-2020 to be considered at the twenty fifth Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2020.
- 4.8 As a result of the pandemic and in-line with the ability provided through the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations, the Council's 2020

AGM was deferred to September 2020, to provide the opportunity for Democratic Services to deploy virtual meetings arrangements across the democratic functions of the Council and afford the opportunity for all members to come accustomed to working virtually.

- 4.9 In recognition of the challenge of holding a Council AGM virtually, the Head of Democratic Services sought the agreement of Presiding Officer and Group Leaders to defer non-urgent business, which included deferring the review of the new question arrangements to the 2021 Annual General meeting.
- 4.10 The 2021 Annual General Meeting of the Council is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May.
- 4.11 As part of a debate on a [Notice of Motion](#) held in February 2021, which related to the scope of Members questions, members considered that a review of the current Members question arrangements should be taken forward by the Constitution and Governance Committee to consider any wider issues relating to how questions are facilitated, before presentation to Council.

## **5. REVIEW**

- 5.1 Members are presented with a summary of the number of questions considered on the record since the introduction of the new arrangement in 2019.
- 5.2 The table attached as appendix 1 also provides detail of the number of questions submitted by non-executive members into the ballot, which determines the order in which those questions are tabled.
- 5.3 This summary indicates that a larger number of non-executive questions have been posed and responded to as a result of the twenty-minute time allocation.
- 5.4 The summary also confirms that a larger number of questions are submitted for tabling since the introduction of the new arrangement. This may indicate that members consider this arrangement to provide better opportunity for individual questions to be considered.
- 5.5 The procedural arrangements for considering a supplementary question as part of the last question heard within the twenty minutes has sometimes been questioned. Members may wish to consider strengthening the advice provided within the constitution relating to this matter.
- 5.6 Members are advised that a prescribed time limit for questions or an agenda item are common procedure in other local authorities such as the Welsh, Scottish and UK Parliaments. As set out in Agenda item 4 this approach is seen as positive approach within the management of business in a virtual or hybrid environment.
- 5.7 It is evident from the attached table the ballot process is utilised by the two largest groups on the Council. A desk-top review of questioning practises over the last two Council terms suggests that this pattern has emerged since the practice of Group Leaders tabling questions on behalf of their group member was

discouraged. Members may wish to consider reintroducing the opportunity for Group Leaders to table questions on a members behalf, as was the case pre-2012, to enable a wider dialogue between non-executive members and members which perform roles of responsibility within the Council.

- 5.8 As part of the role of the members portal, the ability for members to table questions will further be enhanced, as set out within agenda item 5.
- 5.9 As part of this review and to determine any subsequent recommendations to the Annual General Meeting of the Council, Members may wish to consider the following issue:

***Has the amended arrangement increased the number of questions considered at a full Council meeting?***

***Determine whether to endorse the arrangements established in 2019 and advise Council accordingly or consider additional recommendations or amendment for consideration by Full Council.***

***Should any element of the procedural rules within the constitution which facilitate the questioning arrangements during a meeting or the tabling of questions by members be reviewed?***

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report. The initial review and changes to the arrangements were taken forward to allow further accessibility for Members to propose Questions at Council, with the ballot being undertaken to ensure equality and fairness.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Members of the Council's current political groups will be consulted in advance of this matter being considered by Full Council.
- 7.2 Group Leaders have been invited to attend this committee meeting to inform discussions on these matters.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

This report advised of an increase in the number of questions being responded to as part of a Council meeting. The report provided the relevant information for members to review the arrangements introduced in 2019.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**as amended by**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[Annual Council Meeting 2019.](#)

**Questions at Council June 2019 – March 21**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Asked</u>	<u>Tabled</u>	<u>Lab %</u>	<u>Plaid %</u>	<u>Ind %</u>	<u>Cons %</u>		<u>Lab</u>	<u>Plaid</u>	<u>Ind</u>	<u>Cons</u>								
19.06.19	7	14	43	43	14			3	3	1		Cullwick	G Hughes	Grehan	Jarman	Walker	G Jones	G Caple	
31.07.19	5	24	20	80				1	4			Cullwick	J Williams	G Caple	A Cox	P Jarman			
18.09.19	6	17	67	33				4	2			G Hughes	W Lewis	J Brencher	D Owen-Jones	G Davies	E Griffiths		
03.10.19	4	18	50	25	25			2	1	1		G Jones	D Owen-Jones	M Powell	G Davies				
27.11.19	6	15	33	67				2	4			M Forey	K Morgan	S Morgans	D Grehan	P Jarman	E Griffiths		
15.01.19	7	13	100					7				H Boggis	G Caple	J Brencher	A Fox	M Griffiths	S Powell	S Rees	
05.02.20	6	16	67	16.5		16.5		4	1		1	H Fychan	J Bonetto	W Treeby	J James	G Hughes	J Harries		
04.03.20	7	12	72	14		14		5	1		1	J James	P Jarman	J Brencher	H Boggis	S Morgans	J Bonetto	S Pickering	
29.07.20	4	17	25	75				1	3			H Fychan	G Hughes	S Rees-Owen	G Davies				
23.09.20	5	13	40	60				2	3			S Evans	J Edwards	G Caple	H Fychan	E Webster			
07.10.20	7	13	86	14				7	1			G Davies	J Brencher	S Bradwick	M Forey	T Williams	G Hughes	D Owen-Jones	D Williams
21.10.20	7	21	43	57				3	4			P Jarman	Cullwick	H Fychan	K Morgan	W Lewis	A Fox	D Owen-Jones	
11.11.20	4	30	75		25			3		1		G Hughes	J Brencher	M Powell	R Turner				
25.11.20	5	30	80	20				4	1			S Rees	S Pickering	G Stacey	P Jarman	G Jones			
16.12.20	6	23	67	33				4	2			P Jarman	S Morgans	E George	M Forey	G Thomas	S Evans		
20.01.21	6	16	100					6				J Brencher	M Griffiths	J Edwards	S Powell	T Williams	S Bradwick		
10.02.21	5	18	80		20			4		1		M Forey	H Boggis	J Brencher	M Powell	M Griffiths			
10.03.21	5	24	80		20			4		1		J Bonetto	M Powell	T Williams	H Boggis	A S Fox			

**Overall****65% 28% 5% 2%**