

POLICY NO.	M.8
POLICY SUBJECT	Public Question Time
ADOPTION DATE	17 December 1998
LAST VARIATION DATE	27 November 2014 (C.13/1114)
LAST REVIEW DATE	26 November 2020 (C.05/1120)

Policy Objective

To guide members of the public in asking questions of the Council or Management Committee.

Policy Statement

A 'Public Question Time' will be available at the commencement of each meeting of Council and every meeting of a Committee to which the local government has delegated a power or duty (Management Committee) to provide an efficient and effective way for members of the public to ask questions of the Council or Committee and for the Council/Committee to respond. Members of the public are requested to note there is no Public Question Time held at Council's Advisory Committee meetings, (only at Management Committee meetings where these Committees are so termed because of their delegated authority from Council to make decisions). On behalf of Council the Presiding Member will not admit inappropriate questions (including those containing defamatory remarks, offensive language, matters of the personal affairs or actions of Council members or employees, confidential, legal advice/proceedings/processes, questioning the competency of staff or Council members or questions that have been answered by earlier questions or at a previous meeting), nor will it debate any issue during Public Question Time.

The following procedure for Public Question Time to apply:

1. Public question time shall be held in accordance with section 5.24 of the Local Government Act 1995 prior to the discussion of any matter that requires a decision to be made at the Meeting.
2. Question time may be extended in 15 minute intervals by resolution of Council at that meeting.
3. A member of the public who raises a question during Public Question Time is to initially state his or her name and if the matter relates to an item included in the agenda, the number and title of the agenda item.
4. If a person wishes to ask a question that is likely to require research he/she is encouraged to submit the question in writing in advance to the meeting, either via fax to 9761 2023 or email to btshire@bridgetown.wa.gov.au prior to 3.00pm of the day of the meeting. At the commencement of Public Question Time at the meeting the Presiding Member will indicate if any such questions had been submitted and the author of those questions will be given first precedence to ask the submitted questions.
5. A person submitting questions in advance of the meeting must be in attendance at the meeting for the questions to be tabled and responses provided. The author of the questions is to be given the option of either

reading out the questions individually prior to a response to each being provided, or allowing the Presiding Member (or CEO if requested by the Presiding Member) to read out the questions and responses together.

6. A question may be taken on notice. When a question is taken on notice, the Presiding Member shall explicitly state this. If a question is taken on notice a written response is to be given by the CEO (or his nominated delegate) within seven (7) working days of finalisation of the unconfirmed Minutes from the meeting where the question was raised. A summary of the question and the response is to be included in the Agenda for the next Ordinary meeting.
7. Every question and answer shall relate to a matter affecting the Council, be submitted as briefly and concisely as possible and no discussion shall be entered into. At Special Meetings of Council, questions will only be accepted if they relate to Items listed on the Agenda of the Meeting.
8. Adverse reflection on the integrity of Councillors or Officers will not be permitted or tolerated, nor will questions not asked in good faith, relating to the personal affairs of Council Members or employees or otherwise as deemed inappropriate by the Presiding Member.
9. Only questions shall be asked - no statements will be allowed.
10. If during Public Question Time the Presiding Member is of the opinion that:
 - (a) The concern(s) raised by the question(s) by a member of the public have been and/or are presently being dealt with by the Council or an Officer and that no useful purpose will be served by pursuing the matter(s) further in public question time; or
 - (b) A member of the public has spoken for more than three (3) minutes altogether and it is clear that no resolution of his or her concern(s) will be reached during this time,

then the Presiding Member may rule the question will not be addressed and for the member of the public to resume their seat and their turn in the queue.

11. Where the Presiding Member makes a ruling pursuant to the preceding clause, the Presiding Member shall:
 - (a) Cite clause 11(a) or 11(b) and note the reason for the ruling; and
 - (b) Cause the ruling and the reason for the ruling to be noted in the Minutes of the meeting.