



Public Question Time at Council Meetings

The City of Salisbury is committed to the principles of honest, open and accountable government and encourages community participation in the business of Council.

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

Guidelines

1. In accordance with the City of Salisbury – Code of Practice for Meeting Procedures a period of 30 minutes is set aside at the commencement of each ordinary Council meeting for Public Question Time.
2. People wishing to ask questions are encouraged to advise the Chief Executive Officer of the nature of their question in writing at least seven (7) working days prior to the meeting, to enable the question/s and answer/s to be included in the publicly available agenda for the Council meeting.
3. An acknowledgement letter, inviting the person seeking to ask a question to attend the next Council meeting will be sent.
4. The person seeking to ask a question of Council may nominate someone else to attend on their behalf.
5. Should notice of the question/s be advised to the Chief Executive Officer less than seven (7) working days prior to the Council meeting, staff will make the best possible effort to provide an answer at the Council meeting, which the presiding member (the Mayor) will read out.
6. Although questions without notice may be asked by members of the public at a Council meeting, the Chair will give priority to those who have given prior notice of their intention to ask a question.
7. If there has been insufficient notice given to allow an answer to be provided to the question at the meeting, the question will be taken on notice and an answer given in the Agenda for the next ordinary meeting of Council.
8. The procedure during the meeting is as follows:
 - a. the presiding member opens question time with a brief statement on the rules which include:
 - i. the period of time set aside for public question time (a total of 30 minutes);
 - ii. people will be called to ask their question in the order requests have been received;
 - iii. any person who wishes to ask a question without notice will be given an opportunity following those who have provided written notice;
 - iv. the amount of time available to each person to ask questions (a maximum of 10 minutes per person);

- b. people are required to come forward when invited by the presiding member and are required to:
 - i. give their name and address;
 - ii. ask their question;
 - iii. if their question is a question without notice, they are encouraged to provide written copy of their question to a designated council employee.
 - c. a member of the public may ask a Council employee to read their question for them.
 - d. the presiding member will provide an answer to the question asked and the answer will be recorded in the minutes.
 - e. where the question was asked:
 - i. with notice, a written copy of the answers will be provided to the person who asked the question following the giving of the answer.
 - ii. without notice, a copy of the written response will be forwarded to the person who asked the question within three working days; **or**
 - iii. the presiding member will direct a staff member to respond to the question and the answer will be recorded in the minutes; **or**
 - iv. the presiding member will direct that the question be taken on notice.
 - f. where a question is taken on notice, an answer to the question will be entered into the minutes of the next ordinary Council Meeting and a copy of the answer will be provided directly to the person who asked the question.
9. The presiding member may refuse to allow a public question to be listed or refuse to respond to a question put at a meeting without notice that:
- a. is unlawful in any way;
 - b. contains defamatory remarks, offensive or improper language;
 - c. questions the competency of Council staff or Councillors;
 - d. relates to the personal affairs or actions of Council staff or Councillors;
 - e. relates to confidential matters, legal advice or actual or possible legal proceedings;
 - f. is, in the reasonable opinion of the presiding member, proffered to advance a particular point of view, rather than to make a genuine inquiry;
 - g. is vague in nature, or irrelevant to Council;
 - h. is not related to Council activities; or
 - i. is a question that has been substantially asked and answered at a previous Council meeting.
10. No debate is permitted on either the question or the answer.
11. Once the allocated time period of 30 minutes has ended, the presiding member will declare public question time ended. At this time, any person who has not had the opportunity to put forward a question will be invited to submit their question in writing for the next meeting.