

Privacy Statement

Council is collecting your name and address so that it may provide you with a written response to your question. If you do not provide this information, Council will be unable to provide you with a written response. Your telephone contact details are optional and may assist Council in seeking clarification from you on the information you are seeking. You may access or correct your personal information by contacting Council.

Your name will appear in the Council minutes along with details of the question and the Council response. The other personal information on the form will only be disclosed to Councillors' and Council Officers and will be retained on Council files until destroyed in accordance with the Public Records Act 1973.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

Policy

The objective of this policy is to facilitate the asking and answering of questions by members of the public at ordinary meetings of Council in relation to a matter listed on a Council Notice Paper or a significant strategic or governance matter affecting the City.

Procedural Guidelines

1. There are many ways that you can contact the Council to ask a question, receive a service or obtain information. You can contact us by telephone, by visiting the Council offices, sending a letter, a fax or an email and by speaking with one of our staff out in the community. Public Question Time at Council Meetings is but one method that residents and ratepayers have to formally contribute to public debate or seek to input to, and obtain feedback from, Council.
2. You are also welcome to contact the Mayor and Councillors directly. Councillors are elected to represent residents and ratepayers of the City of Whittlesea and to make decisions on your behalf at regular Council meetings.
3. The purpose of public question time is to facilitate the asking and answering of questions by members of the public at ordinary meetings of Council in relation to matters listed on the Notice Paper or a significant strategic or governance matter affecting the City.
4. The answer that we give you at the Council Meeting is an interim reply only and the Council's official response will be sent to you after the meeting.
5. Residents and ratepayers of the City of Whittlesea can ask questions at the formal Council meeting. Persons submitting questions must identify themselves when requested by the Chairperson to do so. If you are unable to attend the meeting for any reason, including because of an 'attribute' as defined in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (eg a disability) you may nominate a representative to attend on your behalf.
6. Regardless of whether you or your representative are able to attend the Council meeting, we will read out your question and provide a response at the meeting and also record your question and the interim response in the minutes of the meeting subject to points 10, 11, 12 and 13 of these Guidelines.
7. The schedule of Council meeting dates and times is available on the City of Whittlesea website (www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au).
8. If you would like to ask a question at a Council meeting, your question should be in writing and in English unless this unreasonably prevents or hinders you from participating. If you are unable to provide your question in writing and/or in English and would like to make alternate arrangements, please contact the Council's Governance Team before the Council meeting to discuss the means by which you may submit your question to the Council meeting. If you do not speak English, we offer various language services to help you communicate with us including VITS and LanguageLinks. If you have a hearing or speech impairment you may use the National Relay Service.
9. We recommend that your question is submitted on the form available on our website as this gives you space to record your contact details as well as your question.

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10. A question must be received by:
- leaving it in the "Question Box" in the Council offices no later than 3pm on the day of the ordinary Council meeting; or
 - leaving it at the reception desk at the Council Offices no later than 3pm on the day of the ordinary Council meeting; or
 - sending it by e-mail (info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au) (Fax: 9409 9810) no later than 3pm on the day of the ordinary Council meeting; or
 - people with communication impairment may present their questions in their preferred formats. Prior notification of the particular format will facilitate acceptance and processing of the question.
11. A time is set aside for public questions during ordinary meetings of Council, in anticipation of you or your representative being present in person or by some other approved means. When we reach that time on the agenda, we will read your question and provide an interim reply. When we read your question we must be sure that it complies with these guidelines. The Chairperson reserves the right to summarise or précis your question when reading it out at the meeting and recording the question in the minutes of the meeting.
12. The Chief Executive Officer must notify the Chairperson of any public questions received including any questions which are disallowed under point 13.
13. The Chairperson may disallow any question on the grounds that it:
- is repetitive of a question already asked;
 - is defamatory or malicious;
 - does not relate to a matter on the Agenda for the meeting;
 - raises an issue of a confidential nature (see below); or
 - is asked to embarrass a Councillor or Council officer.

The Chairperson may provide reasons where a question is disallowed but is not obliged to do so where clarification is impracticable or may, in the opinion of the Chairperson, cause Council to directly or indirectly breach contractual undertakings or offend relevant laws, guidelines, policies and procedures. Statements and opinions are not permitted during question time and will not be read at the meeting.

14. Where a question:
- (a) relates to a matter to be dealt with in the confidential section of the Agenda; or
 - (b) is of a nature that would ordinarily be dealt with in the confidential section of the Agenda,

the Chairperson may, without reading the question aloud, advise the person submitting the question that:

- (a) the question will not be dealt with during the meeting; and
 - (b) a written response will be provided as soon as is practicable.
15. The Chairperson will nominate the appropriate Councillor or Council officer to answer the question or elect to answer it himself/herself. The text of the question or a summary and the response will be recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting. No debate or discussion of the questions or answers is permitted.

Council's official response to questions submitted at a Council meeting will be finalised generally within 5 working days of the Council Meeting and provided in writing or any other reasonable form determined by Council. If a complete response cannot be provided, an interim response will be sent indicating when the full response will be provided.