



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(EPSOM & EWELL)**

LOCAL PROTOCOLS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

13 July 2009

KEY ISSUE

The County Council has agreed that Local Committees can make their own arrangements for handling matters related to public engagement, provided that these arrangements are set out in an approved protocol that is, in effect, a local addition to standing orders.

SUMMARY

This report proposes a protocol to deal with public questions, and petitions to the Local Committee in 2009-13.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] is asked to agree that:

That the Protocol set out in Annexe A be approved.

1. **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

In the County Council's Constitution, Standing Order 40.1 and 40.2 state that: Local Committees shall comply fully with these Standing Orders [Parts 2 and 3] except where they draw up local protocols allowing them discretion to make minor variations to working practices which may only relate to arrangements for public engagements, including arrangements for the presentation of petitions, public questions time etc., and monitoring service performance locally.

Any local protocols shall be drawn up by the Area Director in consultation with the Democratic Services Lead Manager, and approved by the Local Committee."

This report reminds members of the local protocol that the Local Committee (Epsom & Ewell) adopted in June 2008 for Petitions, and proposes that the arrangements remain the same for 2009/2013. [see Annexe A]

2. **FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

There should be no financial implications in adopting the recommendations.

3. **EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

The protocol provides for greater flexibility for members of the public to engage with or address the Local Committee.

4. **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications.

5. **CONCLUSION**

The Council has amended Standing Orders to allow Local Committees to vary procedural rules to make their proceedings more accessible and to promote engagement with the public. Within the limited scope afforded by this relaxation, the report proposes that the current practice of the Local Committee (Epsom & Ewell) is continued.

The Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] is asked to agree that:

The Protocol as set out in Annexe A be approved.

6. **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Officer's recommendation uses the amended standing orders to allow the Local Committees more accessibility to the local residents, promote local responsibility and give residents the ability to affect local decision-making.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Constitution of the Council

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LOCAL COMMITTEE IN EPSOM & EWELL

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

Public Questions

This Local Protocol aims to facilitate greater public engagement in Committee proceedings by establishing terms more favourable to the public than those laid down in the Constitution of the Council.

The Protocol deals with 3 areas – petitions, public questions and public participation at meetings.

PETITIONS

1. Standing Order 65 sets out the arrangements for presenting a petition to a meeting of Surrey County Council and states that 100 or more signatures are required to constitute a petition.
2. The Epsom & Ewell Local Committee have agreed that they will accept a petition from representatives of 10 households [or if less than 15 households are affected by the subject of the petition, then representatives of at least 60% of the households affected].
3. All other conditions set out in Standing Order 65 will still apply to representations made to the Epsom & Ewell Local Committee except that notice must be given in writing or by email at least seven days before the meeting to the Area Director, rather than the Chief Executive.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Standing Order 66 to 66.7 relate to public questions.
2. Standing Order 66.2 states that the notice for public questions is seven days. The Local Committee have agreed that members of the public may submit written questions up until noon five working days before the Committee meeting.
3. The written question and, where possible, a written answer will then be available at the meeting. If the person putting the question so wishes, they may put a brief supplementary question. If an answer to a question is not available at the Committee meeting, or if a supplementary question cannot be answered at the Committee Meeting, a written answer will be sent as soon as possible.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS

1. The public cannot be directly involved [speak at] a formal County Council Committee Meeting, other than putting a formal Public Question, presenting a petition or when formal provision is made at Planning & Regulatory Committee meetings. However the Local Committee in Epsom & Ewell wishes to provide opportunities where appropriate for the public to express their views.
2. Members of the public may ask an informal public question after the adjournment for informal questions. There is no limit to the number of oral questions, which may be asked at any one meeting, although the time available to ask questions is usually limited to 30 minutes.