



Having your say at Public Question Time



Introduction

Are you concerned about a Council service or an issue that affects local people? Did you know that you may present a question or a statement to a meeting of the Council or Cabinet at a public question time session?

This guide sets out the rules for public question time and explains how you can get involved. Public question time can help you to raise an issue in a public meeting. The Council needs to know your views, and public question time is a great way to get involved in local decision-making.

What can I ask questions/make statements about?

The question/statement must relate to:

- ✓ the Council; or
- ✓ the services provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.

Note: You should tell us whether you will attend the Cabinet or Council meeting and if you would like to speak at the meeting.

Are there any restrictions on what I can ask questions/make statements about?

The question/statement must not:

- ✗ relate to a planning or licensing application to be considered by the Council; or
- ✗ be illegal, abusive, obscene, offensive, irrelevant, political or otherwise objectionable; or
- ✗ be identical or very similar to a question/statement that has already been answered at a previous meeting.

Are there any deadlines for sending in a question/statement?

Yes. Your question/statement must be sent to the Assistant Director (Democratic Services) by 4.00 p.m. 11 working days before the date of the Council or Cabinet meeting. This is to allow for a suitable answer to be prepared.

Where shall I send my question/statement?

You should send your question/statement to:

Assistant Director (Democratic Services), Torbay Council
Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay TQ1 3DR

Email: democratic.services@torbay.gov.uk

Fax: (01803) 207011

What happens next?

We will send you a letter or email confirming that we have received your question/statement. We will tell you the name, date and time of the meeting that will receive your question/statement.

The total time allowed for questions or statements will not normally exceed 30 minutes unless the Chairman agrees to make the session longer.

Council meetings are usually held at 5.30 p.m. in the Ballroom at Oldway Mansion, Paignton with a public question time session being held before the meeting at 5.00 p.m.

Cabinet meetings are usually held at 5.30 p.m. in the Meadfoot Room at the Town Hall, Torquay with a public question time session being held before the meeting at 5.00 p.m.

Copies of all questions/statements are sent to all members of the Council or Cabinet and will be made available to the public attending the meeting.

Can I speak on the question/statement?

Yes. If you would like to speak on your question at the Council or Cabinet meeting you must inform the Democratic Services Officer (by telephone 01803 207064 or by email democratic.services@torbay.gov.uk) by 4.00 p.m. 11 working days before the meeting.

What can I say?

You can speak at the Council or Cabinet meeting on your question/statement for up to three minutes (or you can ask another person to speak on your behalf).

You should direct your question/statement to the Chairman, who may request the relevant officer to reply.

You may be allowed to ask one extra question within your three minutes.

What happens if I cannot attend the Council or Cabinet meeting?

You should tell us if you will not be attending the meeting of Council or Cabinet.

If you are unable to attend the Council or Cabinet meeting you may ask the Chairman to read the question/statement to the meeting on your behalf. The Chairman can also decide that they will read the question/statement in your absence.

The Chairman may:

- ask the question/statement on behalf of the questioner;
- indicate that a written reply will be given (you will receive a copy of any written response given); or
- decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question/statement will not be dealt with.

What response will I be given to my question/statement?

A response to a question/statement will be either:

- given orally at the meeting; or
- where the reply cannot easily be given orally, be provided in writing.

What do I need to do on the day of the Council or Cabinet meeting?

You should arrive at the meeting room at 4.50 p.m. and ask for Colin Gamble (the clerk for the meeting) who will show you to your seat in the public seating area.

What happens next?

No discussion will normally take place on any question/statement, although a Councillor may refer a matter raised by a question/statement to the Cabinet or appropriate committee for consideration at a future meeting.

If you need any special help with accessing council meetings or if you have any special requirements please advise the Democratic Services Team before the meeting.

For more information please contact:

Democratic Services on (01803) 207064

Fax: (01803) 207011

Email: democratic.services@torbay.gov.uk

Or visit our website at: www.torbay.gov.uk/councillor-decisions

This document can be made available in a range of languages, on tape, in Braille, large print and in other formats. For further information please contact (01803) 207064.