

Council Debate

Wednesday, 9th March, 2016 at 6.00pm
in the Council Chamber at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct.
3. The impact of austerity upon the Council's ability to serve the community of Dudley.



Strategic Director Resources and Transformation
Dated: 29th February, 2016

Distribution: All Members of the Council

Please note the following concerning meetings at Dudley Council House:

- In the event of the alarms sounding, please leave the building by the nearest exit. There are Officers who will assist you in the event of this happening, please follow their instructions.
- There is no smoking on the premises in line with national legislation. It is an offence to smoke in or on these premises.
- Public WiFi is available in the Council House.
- If you (or anyone you know) is attending the meeting and requires assistance to access the venue and/or its facilities, please contact the officer below in advance and we will do our best to help you.
- Information about the Council and our meetings can be viewed on the website www.dudley.gov.uk
- Elected Members can submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services. You can contact Democratic Services by Telephone 01384 815238 or E-mail Democratic.Services@dudley.gov.uk

Protocols and Arrangements for Dealing with Council Debates

1. Dates and Times of Council Debates

Council debates will be held on the dates and times agreed by the Council in the municipal calendar. Any changes to the agreed dates will be made in consultation with the Group Leaders.

If there is more than one topic of discussion at a meeting, time slots will be allocated for each item to be considered. These will be agreed in advance by the Council.

2. Chairing the Debate

The Council debates are intended to operate within the framework of the scrutiny function of the Council. In this context, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will act as the Chair of Council debates. In his/her absence, the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will preside. If both are absent, a Member will be chosen to act as Chair for that particular occasion only.

3. Format and Purpose

All Members of the Council will be invited to attend. Seating arrangements in the Council Chamber will be flexible, as appropriate to each occasion, to reflect the intended purpose of the open, non- partisan debates.

The debates will give an opportunity for Members to discuss topical issues. The debates will aim to provide a mechanism to improve the conduit between the Council and local residents. The debates will enable Members to have an input into topical subjects allowing opinions and ideas to be put forward.

The debates will further demonstrate the Council's clear transparent and democratic process and act as an informative measure for elected members. The debates will provide a mechanism for more members to be engaged and informed on future policy development and to give their opinions on future items being reported to the Cabinet and Council.

Debates will not be formal Council meetings and the formal Council Procedure Rules will not apply. The Chair shall regulate the discussions and ensure that the debate is carried out properly and fairly.

Debates will not form part of the Council's formal decision making structure, Members may request that relevant Officers prepare reports for background information to form the basis of discussions and debate.

4. Officer Attendance and Support

The Chief Executive, relevant Strategic Directors and Chief Officer(s) will only attend debates if they have a direct involvement in the subject(s) under debate. Democratic Services will also attend to take a record of the meeting.

5. Notice of Items for Debate

Councillors can register items for debate by giving written notice to the Strategic Director Resources and Transformation not later than eight working days before the date of each ordinary meeting of the Council (ie: the same deadline as for submitting Notices of Motion).

The proposed items for debate will be reported to the next ordinary meeting of the Council and a decision will be taken as to whether or not to accept the proposal(s) to go forward for debate. In making a decision, the Council may consider if a topic is already under discussion or included in the work programme of another Committee or relevant body (for example, an item may be included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme).

If no items arise, the pre-booked dates will be cancelled with the agreement of the Group Leaders.

6. Public Notice of Debates

Public notice of the Council debates will be sent to all Members of the Council at least 5 clear working days before the debate is to be held. The notice will be published on the Council's website and the debate will be open to the public and press to attend to observe.

7. Conflicts of Interests

All Members of the Council shall observe the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct when attending Council debates and will be required to make any necessary declarations of interests.

8. Quorum

A Council debate will only take place if at least one quarter of the whole number of members of the Council are present (ie: 18 Members). If during any Council debate, there is not a quorum present, the debate will be adjourned.

9. Conclusion of Debate

The purpose of the Council debates is to enable informal discussion on topical issues. There will not be a vote following the debates, but the relevant members and officers should be present for clarification and advice on any matters arising from the discussions.