

Public Questions Policy

1. General

- 1.1. Meetings of the Strategic and Accountability Boards are open to the public, unless confidential business is being discussed. The agenda pack and appendices are published on the SELEP website, (and the Accountable Body's (Essex County Council) website for the Accountability Board).
- 1.2. During every meeting of the Strategic and Accountability Board there shall be a period of up to 15 minutes to accommodate any questions submitted in accordance with the below. This period shall be at the beginning of the meeting except if the Chair deems it appropriate, then a question may be asked during a relevant agenda item.

2. Notice of questions

- 2.1. A question may be asked under this procedure only if it has been sent to the Secretariat of the South East LEP by email at hello@southeastlep.com or in writing to: Secretariat, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, C302, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1LX.
- 2.2. Questions must be received by no later than 10:30 on the Monday morning before the meeting. If the question is received after this time, the question will be asked at the following meeting.
- 2.3. The question must clearly state whether it is for the Strategic Board or Accountability Board. If this is unclear or requires clarification, the timescale referred to in 2.2 above will start once the appropriate Board has been confirmed by the submitter.
- 2.4. The Secretariat shall circulate prior to the meeting a copy of the question(s) submitted by members of the public to Board members and supporting officers.
- 2.5. Any question may be withdrawn by the person submitting it at any time before the meeting.

3. Addressing the Board

- 3.1. Only one person will be permitted to speak in relation to a question, and no more than one person from an organisation may speak during a meeting.
- 3.2. No person may ask more than one question at any meeting and there will be no opportunity for asking a supplementary question.
- 3.3. Written or photographic materials may not be circulated at the meeting. If there is documentation that is pertinent to answering the question, it is at the discretion of the Chair to permit circulation of this information to Board members in advance of the meeting.
- 3.4. Questions will normally be dealt with in the order in which notice of them is received, except if the Chair decides to group together similar questions.
- 3.5. On arrival and before the start of the meeting speakers should make themselves known to the Governance Officer who will explain what will happen and show speakers to the public seating area.
- 3.6. Any question must be asked within a 3-minute time limit.
- 3.7. Responses will be given immediately after the question has been put to the meeting unless the Chair determines that it will be given as part of the consideration of a relevant agenda item.

- 3.8. If the questioner is unable to be present, or if the question is not able to be dealt with during the meeting, a written answer will be provided in the form in which the question was received within 10 working days of the closure of the meeting.

4. Scope of questions

- 4.1. The Chair may reject a question if it:
- 4.1.1. is not about a matter for which the respective Board has powers or duties;
 - 4.1.2. is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious or offensive;
 - 4.1.3. is substantially the same as a question put to a meeting in the previous six months;
 - 4.1.4. will require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or
 - 4.1.5. is already subject to separate appeal, adjudication, litigation, mediation or dispute resolution.
- 4.2. Notification of rejected questions will be given at the earliest opportunity in the form in which they were received and include reasons for rejection in accordance with 4.14.1 above.

5. Public Misconduct

- 5.1. The Chair may disallow or terminate any public participation which discloses confidential or exempt information or is inappropriate, abusive, indecent, discriminatory, frivolous, irrelevant or otherwise unacceptable.
- 5.2. If a member of the public interrupts a meeting or otherwise behaves irregularly, improperly or offensively, the Chair may request that he leave the room or order that he is removed. In the event of a general disturbance, the Chair may suspend the meeting or direct that the public be excluded from it. No one so removed or excluded will be permitted to return to the meeting or to submit any future questions.

6. District/City/Borough Council Representatives at Strategic Board meetings

- 6.1. Leaders or cabinet members of a district/city/borough council in the SELEP area may join the Strategic Board table and take part in the discussion of an item, but not vote, under the following circumstances:
- 6.1.1. the Chair of the Strategic Board agrees that it is appropriate; and
 - 6.1.2. there is an item on the agenda that significantly affects their area.