

Constitution and Governance Committee – 17 April 2024 – Public Questions

	Annexe A – Public Questions
Name of person submitting	Question
Nigel Behan	<p>I am asking questions about the Review of Council Constitution Part B – Public Participation (Pages 13 - 66) To consider the review of Part B of the Constitution (Item 5)</p> <p>CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</p> <p>a) It is stated in paragraph 1.3 that: Through the work of the review, the working group made it clear that the Council welcomes public participation at all of its committee meetings and has proposed some amendments which will hopefully reflect this. Does this committee believe that (in paragraphs 3.5/6) public participation will be improved by keeping the same gap between the meeting and deadline for questions at 3 clear working days rather than, say, adopting 2 clear working days (Cornwall Council)?</p> <p>b) Often Council papers and appendices are published a week before the meeting leaving little time for members of the public to consider, prepare, offer alternatives or raise concerns. Also the Councils specialist/professional officers draft (author) papers – making recommendations in a particular style/manner whilst attempting to adopt a plain easy to read layout (presentation) - that refers to appendices and other background papers. Is this asymmetry reasonable in the circumstances?</p> <p>c) Paragraph 3.7 states “ The main proposed amendment was to move from a maximum of three questions per speaker to a maximum of two questions. It was felt that with the increase in time allocation and a slight decrease in number of questions, would facilitate a higher number of speakers the opportunity to address each meeting.” (Our emphasis). Surely it is reasonable to keep the number of questions at 3 per speaker, as often difficult interrelated topics/issues/matters arise. So, to have a significant 33.33...% reduction in the number of questions someone can ask appears unwarranted, unnecessary and contradicts the thrust/intention of paragraph 1.3 quoted above?</p> <p>d) Why not raise it to 4 questions per speaker?</p>

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	<p>Best wishes</p> <p>Nigel</p>
<p>Cllr Michael Gay</p>	<p>Question:</p> <p>I have noted with great concern the proposal that Waste and Mineral applications would be determined by direct referral to the Strategic Planning Committee under a change to the Constitution. There appears to be no paper setting out advantages and disadvantages of this proposal and no consultation with the electorate or other bodies affected, so I must provide some detail.</p> <p>Whereas the strategic and national aspects of judging applications are understood as part of the balance, the direct impact of such decisions is usually local...e.g. consideration of the rights and obligations under para 217 b and c of the NPPF The relevant division councillors are best placed to understand such impacts, to receive and judge input from those directly affected: this is how the electorate remain in touch with local government, how they feel able to play their part in decisions that affect them personally. The area planning boards, which are more readily accessible for local residents and businesses, are deemed sufficient to judge equally complex applications, and should be supported by sufficient technical information by the officers: and there could be a presumption for onward referral if full consensus can't be achieved, with any related Strategic meetings could be held at the area board offices.</p> <p>So I ask:</p> <p>Does the committee accept that removing debate and decision from local area boards to a distant meeting in Taunton will have a quelling affect on local involvement and representation in the decision-making process for these very important applications?</p> <p>Thank you</p>

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	Cllr Michael Gay
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