



From mountain to sea

# **Scheme of Governance**

## **Part 4J – Written Question**

### **Guidance**

12 March 2026





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## What is the Purpose of Written Questions?

The Standing Orders, at 4.3, contain a mechanism for elected members to submit a single written question to the Provost, the Chair of any Committee or the Chief Executive at any ordinary meeting of Full Council. This is an important part of the democratic process and sits alongside other mechanisms in the Standing Orders allowing elected members to bring forward issues.

Written Questions are a way to raise an issue that is not being otherwise dealt with by the Council in a public and transparent way. Written Questions may not necessarily seek an outcome but can be used to raise awareness. This process may only be used where an elected member has exhausted all other routes to have the question answered.

## Restrictions on the use of Written Questions

There are some restrictions on the use of Written Questions as follows:-

### **Number, Frequency and Form**

Elected members may address one question to the Provost, the Chair of any Committee or the Chief Executive at an Ordinary Meeting of Full Council. The question may comprise a short narrative to provide context if helpful.

Given that the written question should be very clear and that there is the ability to provide a short narrative, supplementary questions are not permitted. No discussion on the question is permitted and it is not competent to move any motion arising from a question or the answer given.

## **Content Restrictions**

The Written Question provision is an important mechanism that can be used to raise or promote issues however it is also important to ensure that the question is appropriate and meaningful. The following content restrictions are in place to ensure relevance, efficiency, professionalism and clarity. The Provost will consider these matters when considering whether the question is admissible:

### Relevant and competent business within the authority of the Council

The question must pertain to business within the Council's authority and not focus on third parties. Unlike a Notice of Motion, which addresses broader matters of general interest to Aberdeenshire Council, written questions should seek answers on subjects directly related to the Council's remit and within the organisational knowledge. Questions relating to unconnected third parties will not be considered as relevant nor competent business for the Council.

### Public Interest

"In the public interest" generally refers to actions, decisions, or policies that benefit the general public or society as a whole. It encompasses the idea that certain activities or information should be made available or undertaken because they serve the common good, promote welfare, and protect the rights and well-being of the community. Any Written Question should, as well as being in the remit of the Council, be in the public interest. This will ensure that the question and answers are of value to our communities and also justifies the resource required to respond to the question.

### Repetition

No question, or similar question, can be repeated within a period of 12 months.

### Prohibited Matters

Any question must not refer to individual planning or licensing matters or personal issues such as employment/staffing concerns including any negative remarks regarding employees' performance, conduct, or capability. Additionally, questions must not be, in the view of the Provost, defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, offensive, or require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

### Matter Subject to Future Report

It should be noted that if the subject matter is already being dealt with by the service and is, or is due to be, reported to a future meeting of the Council/Committee, this may be a ground for inadmissibility at the discretion of the Provost/Chair.

### Process

The expectation is that the Member has researched the issue, has taken the opportunity to engage with the relevant Service and/or Area Manager, wherever appropriate, and is aware of current action being taken and options available to have the subject matter addressed, and there is clarity in that the issue is not being dealt with elsewhere in the Council before submitting a Written Question. Going through this process will assist Members in formulating the terms of the Question.

Guidance should also be sought from Legal and Governance on wording and competency.

The member submitting the written question, the proposer, must give the question in writing to the Chief Executive not later than noon, fourteen calendar days before the meeting.

The admissibility of the question will then be determined by the Provost following legal advice. If the Provost determines that the question is inadmissible, at the request of the proposer, it will be included on the agenda with the reasons for

inadmissibility subject to any modification considered necessary by the Monitoring Officer.

Whilst officers will strive to ensure that matters raised through this mechanism receive timeous and prompt attention, it is recognised that not all issues can receive the justified treatment they warrant in a short period of time. If the proposer is in agreement, the Question may be tabled at the next meeting of Full Council to enable the response to be fully considered.

The Question, and any written answer, numbered in the order in which they have been received, will be circulated as part of the agenda for the Meeting of Full Council and will be included in the Minute for the Meeting.

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