

LHB MEETING – 12th June 2017

Agenda Item: 16

LITTLEHAMPTON HARBOUR BOARD

Report to: Littlehampton Harbour Board

Report on: Public Questions

Report by: Harbour Master/Clerk

Date: 3rd March 2017

1. Context

1.1 In keeping with the practices adopted at other local and statutory authorities both locally and nationally, it is proposed to move to a written only public questions process. This will entail members of the public submitting their questions in advance of any meeting (within a stipulated time period) to ensure that any preparatory work to answer questions can be carried out. To ensure openness and transparency it is further proposed that a record of all public questions and any responses are published.

1.2 It is hoped that this will allow bona fide public concerns to be better addressed by the LHB and improve the recording of issues raised.

1.3 If adopted these proposals will require an amendment to the LHB Constitution along the following lines:

PART 5 SECTION 1 PARAGRAPH 8

8. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC AND PETITIONS

8.1 General

Members of the public may ask questions of Members and officers of the Harbour Board at meetings of the Harbour Board. The time for questions from the public will be limited to a total of 15 minutes save that the Chairman may extend the time at his discretion. Members of the public must give prior written notice of their question which should be sent to clerk@littlehampton.org.uk or addressed to the Clerk to the Board at the Harbour Office at least three clear days prior to the meeting. Clear days means weekdays (not weekends or Public Holidays) and excludes the day the question is sent and the day of the meeting.

When submitting written questions members of the public are asked to provide their name and address. This is in case it is necessary to follow up in writing with a more detailed answer after the meeting. At the meeting members of the public will have the choice to put the question themselves or to have someone read it out for them. However, the Chairman of the meeting does have discretion that the question will not be dealt with at the meeting and a written reply provided.

8.2 Order of Questions

Questions will be dealt with on a 'first come, first served' basis. Only one question at a time and will be allowed a maximum of 1 minute per question. Only if there is sufficient time left remaining will the original questioner(s) be invited to present further questions. Once the fifteen minutes of Public Questions runs out, written answers will be provided to any further questions remaining unanswered by the Board.

8.3 Scope of Questions

The Clerk and/or Chairman may reject a question if it:

- is not about a matter for which the Harbour Board has a responsibility or which affects the jurisdiction of the Harbour Board,
- is, or in his/her opinion may be, defamatory, frivolous or offensive,
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Harbour Board in the past six months or would lead to the disclosure of Confidential or Exempt information.

8.4 Asking the Question at the Meeting

8.4.1 The Chairman will invite the questioner to put the question. The Chairman may invite a Member or Officer of the Board other than any that may be named or referred to in the question to respond to the question.

8.4.2 At the discretion of the Chairman, a questioner may ask a supplementary question in order to further clarify an answer given by a Member or Officer.

Questions which cannot be dealt with fully during the session will be dealt with under the provisions of 8.5.

8.4.3 If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, he may ask the Chairman to put the question on his/her behalf. The Chairman may:

- ask the question on the questioner's behalf
- indicate that a written reply will be given or
- decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.

8.4.4 If a questioner who has submitted a written question would prefer it to be read out, he may ask the Chairman to put the question on his/her behalf.

8.5 Written Answers

A written record of questions and answers will be based on a summary of the question asked and answer given as verbatim notes are not taken..

This information will be published within 10 working days of the date of the meeting.

To view questions and answers before this date, please contact the Clerk to the Board.

Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the Member or Officer to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer. Copies of written answers will be supplied to Board Members.

8.6 Reference of Question to the Board or a Sub Committee

Unless the Chairman decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to a later meeting of the Harbour

Board or to an appropriate Sub Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

8.7 Petitions

Petitions from the public may be presented to the Chairman at the end of public question time. They shall then stand referred to a future Board meeting or relevant Sub Committee for consideration.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Board approve the changes to the LHB constitution regarding Public Questions to the Board as outlined in this report.