



Name	GOV17 Public Question Item
Policy Type	Council
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Approval Date	15/07/2025
Review Date	14/07/2029

1. Purpose

This policy provides procedures for allowing members of the public to ask questions about Litchfield Council activities. Litchfield Council prides itself on being open and transparent and welcomes the opportunity to address questions from the public.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Ordinary meetings of Council.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

Ordinary Meeting	An ordinary, rather than special, meeting of the Council.
Public Question Time	A section of the ordinary council meeting dedicated to the asking and answering of questions from the public.
Chairperson	The Mayor or other presiding member of the council.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The Chairperson of an ordinary council meeting must ensure that, if required, at least 15 minutes of that meeting is made available for questions by members of the public.
- 4.2 The Chairperson of an ordinary council meeting may;
 - i. address questions on notice submitted by members of the public; and
 - ii. invite any members of the public present at the meeting to ask questions relating to the activities of the Council.
- 4.3 A question by any member of the public under this regulation and an answer to that question are not to be debated at the ordinary council meeting.

4.4 The Chairperson of an ordinary council meeting may;

- i. refuse to accept a question from a member of the public; or
- ii. require a question from a member of the public asked without notice to be put on notice and in writing to be answered at a later ordinary council meeting.

4.5 If the Chairperson of an ordinary council meeting refuses to accept a question from a member of the public, the Chairperson is to give a reason for doing so. The reason for refusal will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

4.6 Asking a Question Without Notice

4.6.1 Any member of the public may ask a question. Questions may be submitted in two ways;

- i. Questions can be submitted in writing and be 'put on notice' before the council meeting, or;
- ii. A question may be raised from the public gallery 'without notice' during public question time.

4.7 Submitting a Question on Notice

4.7.1 Members of the public are encouraged to submit questions in writing and be put on notice to address the Council in the public question time. Council recommends this option, as it will enable Council to provide a researched, complete written response.

4.7.2 To submit a question in writing, members of the public can lodge questions with Council by email, letter or through a form on the Council Website.

4.7.3 Forms will need to be lodged at the Council Office no later than 12:00 noon on the prior business day before the scheduled meeting.

4.7.4 Each person with a question with notice that has been accepted or declined will be advised by no later than four hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

4.7.5 When contacted, a person who has submitted a question with notice will need to confirm their presence at the meeting for their question to be read.

4.7.6 The locality and name of the person asking a question on notice and the question will be included in the meeting minutes. If a member of the public asked a question without notice from the public gallery at the meeting, this question will be recorded in the minutes with a summary of any answer given in response.

4.8 Questions May Be Refused in Certain Circumstances

- 4.8.1 The Chairperson may refuse to allow a public question to be listed or refuse to respond to a question put at a meeting without notice that:
- i. is unlawful in any way;
 - ii. contains defamatory remarks, offensive or improper language;
 - iii. questions the competency of Council staff or Councillors;
 - iv. relates to the personal affairs or actions of Council staff or Councillors;
 - v. relates to confidential matters, legal advice or actual or possible legal proceedings;
 - vi. relates to any matter that pertains to a matter prescribed as confidential;
 - vii. the question is in the nature of an administrative query and considers it appropriate to respond administratively through the Chief Executive Officer;
 - viii. is, in the reasonable opinion of the Chairperson, proffered to advance a particular point of view rather than to make a genuine enquiry;
 - ix. is not related to Council activities or vague in nature or irrelevant to Council;
 - x. is a question that has been substantively asked at the current or previous Council Meeting.

4.9 At the meeting

- 4.9.1 At the Council Meeting, public question time will occur towards the start of the meeting, after the Disclosures of Interest.
- 4.9.2 If accepted by the Mayor, the question will be responded to, or, it may be taken on notice as a question on notice for the next Council meeting, or the Chief Executive Officer can provide a written response.
- 4.9.3 The Mayor may direct a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer to provide a response.
- 4.9.4 In the event that the same or similar question is raised by more than one person, an answer may be given as a combined response.
- 4.9.5 Questions asked with notice will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting with the full written response.
- 4.9.6 Questions without notice will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting with a summary of any response given.

- 4.9.7 Once the allocated time period of fifteen minutes has ended, the Chairperson can declare public question time ended. At this time, any person who has not had the opportunity to put forward a question will be invited to submit their question in writing for the next meeting.
- 4.9.8 Questions without notice may be asked by members of the public with a three minute time allocation to asking questions per member of the community.
- 4.9.9 Members of the Public who have submitted a Question with notice will be provided the opportunity to ask a supplementary question of the Council with a three minute time allocation.

5. Associated Documents

GOV02 Meeting Procedure

6. References and Legislation

Northern Territory Local Government Act

7. Review History

Date Reviewed	Description of changes (Inc Decision No. if applicable)
17/02/2021	Adoption of Policy.
15/07/2025	New policy adopted as per resolution ORD2025 11-408