

Meeting **Standards Committee 10 March 2025**

Title: **Changes to Council Standing Orders - Supplementary Questions**

Lead Officer: Ayshe Simsek Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager

Report authorised: Fiona Alderman Assistant Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer

1. Describe the issue under consideration.

- 1.1 This report considers changes to the Council Standing Orders section on second supplementary questions following queries at the July Council meeting and discussions at the Constitution Working Group in October, November and January on how this provision can remain in Council Standing Orders and be allocated in a politically proportionate way.
- 1.2 Following consideration of the process for oral Councillor questions at Council meetings, the Constitution Working Group agreed that this new wording is compiled following the guidance in Article 5 in the Council's Constitution and reflects that consideration of second supplementary questions is taken forward in a proportionate and fair way according to political representation.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To recommend to Full Council on the 24th of March 2025 the changes to CSO 10.7 outlined at paragraph 6.3.

4. Reasons for decision

The reasons for recommendations are set out within the report and summarised at paragraph 6.2

5. Alternative options considered.

To note take forward the changes would impact on the efficiency of Full Council meetings.

6. Background information

- 6.1 At the meeting of CWG on the 26th of January and 23rd of February, it was agreed to increase the opportunity for back bench member participation in Council meetings and to increase the number of oral questions from 6 to 9 and the time allocation from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. These constitutional changes were subsequently agreed with by Standards Committee and Full Council in March 2024. On the 22nd of July Full Council meeting the updated format of Council meetings, with increased oral questions, and deletion of the debate item, and timed motions was activated. This meeting brought to the light the need to have more clarity on the assignment of second supplementary questions as CSO 10.7 could be interpreted equally as an opportunity for the main opposition or any Opposition Group to have the opportunity to ask a second supplementary question. At the meeting it was noted that this issue would be put forward to the Constitution Working Group for consideration. To note that in previous Council meetings CSO 10.7 and the provision of second supplementary questions has rarely been used.
- 6.2 The Constitution Working Group considered this issue and a detailed flow chart on how in practice councillor question were taken forward at Council meetings and discussed the following
- Second supplementary questions were an important provision and even if an answer could not be given at the meeting, they could be responded to in writing.
 - Providing the Mayor with discretion to allow second supplementary would be difficult to manage and ensure that there was fair access given to this provision. Also, without the guidance to follow, this would make chairing the meeting more difficult.
 - There was a need to have a simple process that was easily understood and set out some sort of allocation
 - Keeping second supplementary questions as this part of the meeting was not scripted and allowed for an extra layer of accountability.
- 6.3 In conclusion the Constitution Working Group recommend the following changes (which are underlined and for insertion to CSO 10.7)

The Councillor asking any question may ask the first supplementary question without notice of the Councillor to whom the first question was asked. The second supplementary question, relevant to the original question, may be asked by a Councillor of the other political party or groups unless they do not wish to use it in which case it reverts to the party asking the original question. In allocating the second supplementary questions, the Mayor will have regard to: the overall time period for Council questions, their constitutional role and function in chairing the Council meetings set out in Article 5, and the political party or group's proportional representation on the Council. (In principle this would usually be four questions to the first opposition group and one question to the second opposition group) Each supplementary question must arise directly

out of the original question or the reply. No supplementary questions may be asked on written answers.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

The Council's Constitution supports the governance of the Council and its Decision making thereby assisting the Council to meet its strategic outcomes.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

8.1 Finance and Procurement

8.2 No financial implications arise from this report.

8.3 Legal

8.4 These are set out within the report.

8.5 Equality

8.6 There are no equality matters in this report.

9. Use of Appendices

Article 5 - Chairing the Council meeting

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 The Council Constitution which can be found at.

<http://www.haringey.gov.uk/local-democracy/about-Council/Council-constitution>