

Agenda Item 16

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY	
REPORT TITLE: NLWA MEETING MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME ARRANGEMENTS	
REPORT OF: DEPUTY CLERK	
FOR SUBMISSION TO THE NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY	DATE: 20 th September 2006
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report proposes the introduction of a Members' Question Time at meetings and discusses how best this might be put into practice. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information Documents used in the preparation of this report: None Contact Officer: Thomas Ribbits, Deputy Clerk, NLWA, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE Telephone: 020 7974 1915 thomas.ribbits@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATION: Members are asked to consider the proposal above and decide the following: (i) Whether to introduce a Members' Question Time for future meetings of the Authority (ii) If they do wish to do so, to decide whether to agree the proposals in the report as the most appropriate for the Authority or to agree changes (iii) If they wish to proceed, to agree to accept changes to the Standing Orders of the Authority on the basis above (or amended to reflect changes to the proposal if these are agreed)	

Signed by:

Deputy Clerk

Date:

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY – 20th SEPTEMBER 2006

NLWA MEETING MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It has been suggested that the North London Waste Authority, in order to increase transparency for the public, should consider the introduction of a Members' Question Time process at its meetings.
- 1.2 Whilst no other statutory joint waste disposal authority in the United Kingdom has introduced such a process, it is one that is used by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) at its meetings. That body allows members of the authority to submit questions prior to the meeting which are then formally asked at the meeting and answered by the Chair. Members are then permitted to ask supplementary questions if they wish, as long as this relates to the original question.
- 1.3 The process is also similar to that used by various councils and so officers have looked how such question times operate and have tailored them to best suit the North London Waste Authority.
- 1.4 Members are therefore asked to consider the proposals below.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 Members may ask one question each in writing a week before the meeting: the deadline will be noon on the Wednesday the week prior to the meeting (six calendar days before the meeting). This timescale means that questions will not appear on the agenda for the meeting. If Members want the questions to be published as part of the agenda, the deadline for submission of questions will need to be changed to two weeks before the meeting.
- 2.2 The questions must relate to the business carried out by the Authority, and will be subject to legal clearance on this basis.
- 2.3 Only five questions may be asked in total at any one meeting and will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis.
- 2.4 These questions will be circulated to the Chair and to relevant officers/advisers to produce a response.
- 2.5 The answers and responses will then tabled at the meeting to everyone present including the public.
- 2.6 At the Question Time part of the meeting, which will be in the early part of the agenda, the Member that submitted the first question will read out his/her question (to save time, the Member may wish to say "question as written" as the paperwork will have been circulated to those present) and the response is given (often in the same way).

- 2.7 There may be one supplementary question from the originator if desired. The Chair may answer this orally or arrange for a written response to be provided.
- 2.8 Question time shall be restricted to 15 minutes. Any questions not dealt with in the time allowed shall receive a written reply as soon as possible after the meeting.
- 2.9 The questions and answers will be incorporated into the minutes as an appendix.
- 2.10 It is envisaged that the Question Time will not operate at the Annual Meeting of the Authority as the identity of the Chair for the forthcoming year will not be known.

3. Changes to Standing Orders

- 3.1 To permit this to take place, the standing orders of the Authority will need to be amended by the inclusion of the attached paragraph.

“Question Time

At a meeting of the Authority other than the Annual General Meeting, any member may put a question to the Chair of the Authority about matters for which the Authority is responsible. There will be a maximum of five questions overall and these will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Notice of any question must be given in writing to the Deputy Clerk by noon six calendar days before the meeting of the Authority. Questions must be accompanied by a copy of any document to which they refer. The Legal Adviser shall disallow questions which he/she considers to be unsuitable in form, frivolous or derogatory to the dignity of the Authority. Not more than one supplementary question arising directly out of the reply shall be allowed by the Chair, and must come from the originator of the question. Question time shall be restricted to 15 minutes. Any questions not dealt with in the time allowed shall receive a written reply as soon as possible after the meeting.”

- 3.2 This paragraph, if accepted, should be included as paragraph A19 in the Standing Orders and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.
- 3.3 Standing Order A9.2 (which details what business may be conducted at Ordinary Meetings) should also be amended to include the Members’ Question Time as one of the pieces of business which should be carried out at ordinary meetings.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the proposal above and decide the following:

(i) Whether to introduce a Members' Question Time for future meetings of the Authority

(ii) If they do wish to do so, to decide whether to agree the proposals in the report as the most appropriate for the Authority or to agree changes

(iii) If they wish to proceed, to agree to accept changes to the Standing Orders of the Authority on the basis above (or amended to reflect changes to the proposal if these are agreed)

5. Finance Adviser's Comments

5.1 The Finance Adviser was consulted on this report and has no comments to make.

6. Legal Adviser's Comments

6.1 The Legal Adviser was consulted on this report and has no comments to make.

Report Ends