

## **Written Questions for Councillors: Guidance**

**March 2023**

The written process is a way to ask formal questions of cabinet members and committee chairmen. It has replaced the written questions which used to be dealt with in council meetings.

### **When can I use this process?**

You can use this to ask about anything, but it is best to use it for formal questions where you want a written answer that is published.

If it is a question about a specific service, eg highways, social care, libraries etc, you will normally be better using the Member Enquiries service.

This process is not suitable for detailed enquires or responding to a constituent's concerns, particularly if that involves looking at separate documents or emails – please continue to use member enquiries or contact the Cabinet Member directly for that.

### **How do I ask a question?**

Questions will only be accepted via this form. You can only ask a question if you are logged into your ECC account or from an ECC device. You cannot submit documents with a written question.

<https://forms.office.com/r/UiJ5L79sAw>

or

<https://tinyurl.com/ECCWQF>

### **How long will it take to receive a reply?**

You should normally receive a reply within 10 working days, though we aim to be quicker. It may be that if the Member is on holiday or unwell then either someone else will reply on their behalf, or you may have to wait a little longer.

### **What will be published?**

You will receive a reply to your question by email.

We will publish the question and the answer in batches, meaning that there may be a short delay until publication.

Questions and answers will be published here.

<https://cmis.essex.gov.uk/essexcmis5/>

### **Will my question be edited before publication?**

Questions may be edited. This rarely happens but we have occasionally edited questions for brevity or correct typos. We do not edit the substance of a question.

If you ask a question which isn't suitable for publication, such as one about a specific constituent, then it may be referred to Member Enquiries.

### **What if I don't want my question / reply to be published?**

Do not use this process. Use the normal Member Enquires service instead. Member Enquiries are not published whereas all questions asked using the written questions process will be published.

### **Is there a limit on the number of questions I can ask?**

There is currently no limit on the number of questions that may be asked.

### **Can I ask a follow up question?**

There is no specific follow up process, but you can of course ask another question.

Please consider whether the written question process is the best way of doing this - it may be better just to email the Cabinet Member or their advisor directly.

### **Will my question and the answer be reported to a meeting of full Council?**

No. You can of course ask an oral question at Council if you wish when the question will be available on YouTube.

### **What's the difference between this and the Member Enquiries process?**

Please use the Member Enquiries process for routine queries, particularly when where the Cabinet Member doesn't need to be involved or if you don't want the question to be published. We will generally be able to answer Member Enquiries slightly more quickly than written questions as the process is slightly simpler.

Unlike the Member Enquiries process, you cannot send any supporting documents with a written question. Questions using the written questions process must be submitted on the form.

### **What if I am having difficulties in accessing the form?**

Please contact your support officer in the Democracy Team. They will be pleased to help you.

### **Am I guaranteed a reply from the person to whom my question is directed?**

You are guaranteed a reply, but questions may be redirected to a more appropriate person, just as happens with written questions.

**Remind me, how do I ask a question?**

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You need to use an ECC device or be logged into your ECC account.