



COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMME 2023

PROBLEM-SOLVING: PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO MANAGING MEETINGS

1. Councillor Barker announces at the start of the Planning Committee meeting that he will have to leave early before the conclusion of the debate and therefore that he has arranged for another member of his party group to substitute for him when he leaves.

Is this allowed? What advice would you give on workable substitution arrangements which are safe from legal challenge?

2. The Cabinet has decided to close 11 libraries and invest in 13 new neighbourhood centres as part of plans to save £20m. A number of members are concerned about a public backlash.

What are their options for challenging this decision at the next Council meeting? What procedure rules could be used to raise public concerns at the meeting?

In what (if any) circumstances can the Council overturn or amend this or any other Cabinet decision?

3. Councillor Robinson moves a motion in Council (duly seconded) that the Cabinet be formally censured for the way in which it has handled the re-letting of the waste collection contract. Three amendments are then moved in quick succession, the first applauding the action taken by the Cabinet, the second seeking to refer the matter to the Environment Scrutiny Committee, and the third adding a request to the Council to review the Cabinet's membership. This last amendment is not seconded, but the others are.

How do you handle these amendments?

What's a direct negative?

Does it matter that the 3rd amendment has not been seconded?

Is the 3rd amendment valid?

4. You are approached by the Cabinet Member for Community Services for advice following her meeting with a local community group the previous evening at which she promised them a grant of £15,000 towards the running costs of their new children's play scheme.

What advice would you give?

5. The Leader wants to add an item to the agenda for the next Cabinet meeting which is scheduled to take place in the week after next. It's a key decision. A late item will need to be added to the agenda for the meeting which has not yet been published. However, no prior public notice has been given for this item.

What needs to be done to enable the decision to be taken by Cabinet at its next meeting?

6. It is drawn to your attention by one of the group whips that Councillor Rogers has not attended a meeting of the council or any of its committees for 5 or 6 months.

What are the implications of this and what course of action would you advise?

7. At a meeting of the Audit Committee a vote is taken to approve the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2015/16 as recommended in the report of the Head of Finance. On your count, the voting is 5 for the recommendation and 6 against. However, the Chairman, who has not voted at this point, casts her vote for the recommendation and then exercises her casting vote to carry the recommendation by 7 votes for and 6 against - and announces that the recommendation is agreed. An opposition councillor challenges the decision and the Chairman turns to you for advice that she may not want to hear!

Was the vote conducted properly? In what circumstances can the Chairman vote twice?

8. The Committee reaches an item on its agenda when you think Councillor X has a disclosable pecuniary interest. She has not said anything, including when the standard item was dealt with at the beginning of the meeting.

What would you do?