



## Border to Coast Joint Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Report Title:** Protocol for Public Questions

**Report Author:** George Graham (Director – SYPA)

### 1.0 Executive Summary:

1.1 Following the receipt of questions from members of the public at the last meeting of the Joint Committee this report proposes a protocol for dealing with public questions going forward.

### 2.0 Recommendation:

2.1 It is recommended that the Joint Committee approve the protocol for dealing with public questions at meetings of the Committee as set out in the body of this report.

### 3.0 Background and Options

3.1 Meetings of the Joint Committee like those of any other local authority committee are held in public. Most local authorities make provision for members of the public to ask questions at meetings of this sort as part of their processes for engaging with citizens. At the last meeting of the Joint Committee members of the public (who also happened to be members of Border to Coast partner funds) asked a question and in the absence of any formal protocol for dealing with questions the Chair exercised discretion to allow the question to be asked and answered, with a copy of the question and answer appended to the minutes of the meeting.

3.2 Following this member of the Joint Committee asked the secretariat to devise a protocol for dealing with public questions. This report sets out a proposed protocol.

a) At the discretion of the Joint Committee questions from members of the public may be received at any meeting, provided that seven clear days' notice in writing has been given to the Secretary to the Joint Committee of the proposed attendee(s), whether virtual or in person and the object of their question(s).

b) To be eligible to submit a question a member of the public must be either:

- i. An elector in the geographical area of one of the administering authorities represented on the Joint Committee, and/or
  - ii. A member of one of the partner funds represented on the Joint Committee.
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- c) No more than 3 questions will be dealt with at any meeting of the Joint Committee. The questions to be answered being determined on a “first come first served” basis where more than 3 are submitted.
- d) If members of the public are to attend:
  - i. If attending in person they shall not exceed two persons in number, only one of whom shall speak and the speech inclusive of the reading of a memorial or petition, if one is to be presented, shall not exceed five minutes.
  - ii. If attending virtually a member of the public may speak and the speech inclusive of the reading of a memorial or petition, if one is to be presented, shall not exceed five minutes.
  - iii. the Chair shall put a motion that they be received which motion shall be put and moved without discussion. On the motion being approved, they shall be admitted.
- e) The Chair shall invite the relevant officer(s) to provide a response to any question from a member of the public, which shall be appended to the minutes of the meeting.
- f) No discussion shall take place on any matter raised by a question from the public, but any member of the Joint Committee shall be at liberty to move a motion that the subject matter be referred to the next ordinary meeting of the Joint Committee or to such other body as may be appropriate and such motion, on being seconded, shall be at once put to the vote.

3.3 These provisions are broadly based on those of South Yorkshire Pensions Authority but with additional limitations in terms of the numbers of attendees and questions which reflect the practicalities associated with meetings of the Joint Committee. They also provide for virtual attendance to ask questions on the basis that given the wide geographical spread of potential questioners this is likely to be both more inclusive and environmentally friendly.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

4.1 The proposals set out in this report are intended to codify arrangements which are intended to promote public accountability while at the same time not inhibiting the overall work of the Joint Committee.

#### **Report Author:**

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