

Agenda item:	13
Attachment:	A

HRA Board Cover sheet

15 November 2023

Title of paper:	Questions from the public at HRA Board meetings
Submitted by:	Steve Tebbutt
Summary of paper:	<p>One of the recommendations from the GIAA review of Board effectiveness advised the HRA should consider the current approach to public attendance at Board meetings with a suggestion that members of the public may feel more engaged if they are able to freely ask questions at some point during the meeting.</p> <p>This paper sets out the current position and proposal for consideration at the next Board meeting.</p>
Reason for submission:	For approval
Further information:	<p>Members of the public can observe the Part 1 – Public Session of the HRA Board meeting. Currently, time is allocated at the end of the meeting to allow members of the public to raise questions to the Board provided they have submitted their question in writing to the Company Secretary 24 hours prior to the meeting.</p> <p>In practice no questions have ever been submitted prior to the meeting. Occasionally members of the public have been asked if they have any questions or comments they would like to raise during the meeting.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed that the Board reviews the principle of allowing members of the public to only ask questions if they have submitted these prior to the meeting and consider whether a more open approach allowing questions to be asked during agenda items or at a designated slot, without prior submission, would be preferable.</p> <p>Possible risks associated with allowing open questions without prior submission include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board agendas are often full and tight for time therefore additional time may be required to answer complex questions or multiple questions. - The nature of the question is unknown and may put the Board on the spot in terms of answering complex, challenging or sensitive questions. <p>However, to mitigate these risks, we could give the Chair the right to refuse to answer any questions and provide a written response after the meeting.</p> <p>For complex or lengthy topics, we could also give the Chair the option to defer the need for an immediate verbal response and provide a written response at a later date which would be noted at the subsequent Board meeting.</p> <p>Finally, we would also propose verbal questions should only be in relation to items on the agenda, as this is published a week or so prior to the meeting. Any topics which fall outside topics on the agenda would need to be submitted in writing prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Following approval, the Observing and attending HRA Board meetings: Common questions and answers webpage will be updated.</p> <p>A linked piece of work, considering the transparency, visibility and accessibility of Board meetings and decision making, is in progress, with a questionnaire circulated to HRA staff. The findings from this piece of work will follow at the next meeting.</p>
Budget / cost implication:	None
Dissemination:	Published with HRA Board papers
Time required:	5 minutes