

Public Participation at Parish Council Meetings

Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings, but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chair authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Parish Councils can set out a time for public participation at an agreed time when members of the public are invited to speak. Members of the public should not be involved in the decision making of the Council. The council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included on the agenda. As a matter of best practice, the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors. If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for future meetings at the discretion of the Council. Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting after the public session as observers but will not be able to join in the discussion unless invited to do so by the Chair. Members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g., staffing matters, tenders for contracts, and some legal issues).

Rules

- The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with the standing orders shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.
- A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic, then they should nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of public participation period.
- The Clerk must receive written statements at least 3 working days prior to the meeting.
- The Chair has the right to say that any questions or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.
- In accordance with the standing orders, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort) The chair of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking,
- A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chair of the meeting.
- Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- Members of the public may make representations, answer questions, and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.
- Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.

- A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session shall not require a response and there should be no debate or discussion between the Council and the public.
- A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. But any libellous, offensive, and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.
- All persons present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates them. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.
- All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. There should be no reference to personal views on any person.
- **Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and excluded a disorderly person.**

Adopted 4th August 2021
Reviewed July 2022