

Parish Council Meetings: Public Participation Guidance

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 Chair authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, we set out a time for public participation within the meeting agenda when members of the public are invited to speak. Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council. Members of the public may be excluded by resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues).

RULES

- The session will be limited to a maximum time of 20 minutes.
- The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 5 minutes. The Chair will decide whether an immediate response will be given at the meeting, whether a written response will be made or whether the item will be forwarded as an item on the Agenda for the next meeting.
- 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 the public participation period.
- Written submissions are encouraged and must be received by the Clerk at least 3 days prior to the meeting.
- Questions must be addressed through the Chair and the Chair has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.
- Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under any 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.
- Members of the public should note that the council is only allowed to take decisions committing the council on topics that are publicised on the agenda, except where a response is absolutely required prior to the next scheduled meeting of the council. Therefore, the council will not enter into any substantive debate or discussion on any question asked if not related to an agenda item, nor may they reach any decisions within that council meeting.
- All communication shall be through the Chair. Councillors may not address questions raised by members of the public except through or with the permission of the Chair. Members of the public may not address individual councillors except through, and with the permission of the Chair. The Chair's decision on any issue related to public participation is final. Councillors and members of the public must respect the role of the Chair and may be asked to leave if, in the opinion of the Chair, they breach this guidance in a way that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.
- The Chair may, at their discretion, invite a member of the public to speak on an agenda item during the parish council meeting if, in the opinion of the Chair, that individual has relevant information not available to the parish council which will help in its deliberations.
- 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.
- Members of the public are asked to respect the fact that council meetings are called to conduct council business and interruptions during council business are not allowed and will not be permitted.
- If, in the opinion of the Chair, the business of the meeting is disrupted in any way, the Chair will ask the person/s causing the disruption to desist and if they refuse or persist, will ask them to leave.

Approved 26th August 2020. To be reviewed and adopted at the Annual Parish Council Meeting each year as an annex to the Standing Orders.