

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS

Resolved by Council in November 2016

Review Date: November 2020

Reviewed August 2021

Members of the public have the legal right to attend Parish Council meetings and have the option to attend in person or virtually. To allow the public to attend meetings safely the Parish Council undertakes a full risk assessment. Following this assessment, the Parish Council may decide to impose certain restrictions which could include - numbers of attendees, social distancing, and PPE. This is to ensure the health and safety of its Councillors, Officers and parishioners is maintained.

Questions or comments from members of the public shall appear as an agenda item for all Parish Council meetings (including extraordinary and planning committee meetings). It shall be held after declarations of interest so that everyone is aware if a member has a prejudicial interest. The guidelines are a maximum of 15 minutes and no more than 5 minutes devoted to any one topic. These guidelines will be used in event of any public participation in person or virtually via Zoom. In the event of several people wishing to speak either in favour or against the issue, the respective group(s) will be requested to select one spokesperson to address the Council. One person wishing to speak either in support or against the issue will be allowed to address the Council even if no other person wishes to present an opposing argument.

The Chair has the right to extend the time for Public Participation.

Members of the public are able to raise issues of concern though only items on the agenda will be considered at by the Council at the meeting.

Members of the public are reminded that the following procedures will apply:

- Questions and presentations of petitions will be allowed on matters affecting the Parish Council during the allocated Public forum. The time allocated to the public participation session of the meeting shall not exceed 15minutes.
- For those parishioners who attend the meetings in person, the Chair will invite those who wish to speak to put their hands up and identify themselves.
- For those parishioners who attend virtually via Zoom, the Chair will invite those who wish to speak to raise their hand 'virtually' using the hand icon and identify themselves either via header on their video screen or when permitted to speak.
- Their names will be taken by the Clerk and they will be invited in turn to speak.

It should be noted that members of the public who do not indicate they wish to speak when invited to do so, will not be allowed to do so - and must remain silent in person or on mute when attending virtually.

Each individual questioner shall only be allowed to speak once (unless invited by the Chair) and shall be restricted to three minutes.

The questions must be relevant to the business of the Parish Council or Committee and shall not require a response or debate, as the agenda item will be debated at the meeting. Although questions need not be submitted in advance, it should be noted that questions presented in that form are more likely to receive a detailed response and may, if the Clerk or Chair deem it appropriate, to be included on the Agenda for consideration of the Parish Council or Committee.

Questions should be directed to the Chair of the meeting who may request another Member, or the Clerk, to respond. Questions regarding matters not on the agenda will be noted and be answered at a later stage outside the current meeting or, if a decision by the Parish Council is required, added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Answers to questions may take the form of:

- A 'direct' oral response.
- Where the desired information is contained in a publication, by reference to said publication.
- When considered appropriate, then a written reply may be considered.

Questions that relate to personal affairs of either the questioner or any other named person are not permitted, but only questions relating to matters of policy or practice – i.e. matters of general rather than individual concern. Any question, which in the opinion of the Chair is scurrilous, improper, capricious, irrelevant or otherwise objectionable, shall be disallowed.

A Parish Council Meeting is not a public meeting; it is a meeting held in public. Therefore, it is undesirable to allow members of the public to speak throughout the meeting as this runs the risk of confusing the roles of Councillors, who participate in the meeting, and members of the public who observe. Members of the public will not be allowed to speak during the debate by the Council. The Chair may decide to adjourn the meeting where Councillors express a wish to seek additional clarification from members of the public.

Members of the public should not heckle or otherwise disrupt proceedings and should respect the rulings of the Chair. The Chair of any meeting has an inherent right to exclude a disorderly person. Members of the public have a legal right to be present, whether in person or virtually. Any motion to exclude one or more of them will be a last resort and will require the member of public to leave room or if attending virtually will be removed electronically by the Clerk. Alternatively, if there is serious disorder the Chair may decide to adjourn the meeting for a short time to allow people to calm down.