



Public Participation Policy

Meetings of the Town 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 Town Council Mayor authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Town 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 in 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 a future meeting 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 Mayor.

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, some legal issues).

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM RULES

- This session will be limited to a maximum of 15 minutes.
- The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 3 minutes.
- 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.
- If the issue is on the agenda, then it will be discussed under the appropriate item. Members of the public are therefore requested to leave their contact details with the Clerk before leaving the Council meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query.
- 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.
- 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.

- A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his/her/their comments to the chair of the meeting.
- The Chairman 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 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 an immediate response and there should be no debate or discussion between the Council and the public. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- 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.
- A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be kept. But slanderous, offensive, and discriminatory comments will not be noted.
- All person's present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates him or her. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.
- 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 exclude a disorderly person.
- Written statements must be received by the Clerk at least 5 days prior to the meeting.
- The Council reserves the right to vary any element of this policy if it is felt that it will be of benefit.