

POLICY ON PUBLIC SPEAKING

Review due	Amendments to Policy	Date Reviewed
	First issue	December 2016
September 2024	New Format	September 2024
September 2027		



POLICY ON PUBLIC SPEAKING

1.0 BACKGROUND

As part of the Parish Council's commitment to improving the level of public participation in local government, time has been allocated at the start of each meeting for public participation. The following procedure should not be applied rigidly but there should be guidelines within which the Parish Council can consider any application to speak on an individual basis.

2.0 PROCEDURE

A maximum period of 20 minutes will be allocated at the beginning of each meeting to allow public questions to be heard and answered. Questions may be submitted either in writing, by telephoning or by e-mail to the Clerk to the Council prior to the meeting to allow sufficient time for research and preparation of an appropriate response.

Anyone wishing to ask a question on any item to be considered at the meeting will be allowed a maximum period of three minutes to state their question on the appropriate item(s). In the event of several people wishing to speak either in favour or against the issue, the 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 question(s) will be answered by the relevant councillor, following which the questioner will be allowed to ask one supplementary question. If the supplementary question is not able to be answered at the meeting, a written reply will be sent to the questioner as early as possible after the meeting.

Members of the public will be allowed to stay for the rest of the meeting, but will only be able to speak on any other agenda item for a further allotted three minutes. Only if time permits the Chair and councillors may agree to continue the debate/issues raised.

3.0 CONDUCT

The Council's Standing Orders (section 3.7) state that: "Members of the public may be invited to speak during any item at council meetings at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting. Additionally, an opportunity for public questions will be made available immediately before the commencement of each meeting".

However, no person shall at a meeting persistently or wilfully obstruct business, or behave irregularly, offensively, improperly or in such a manner as to scandalise the Council or bring it into contempt or ridicule.

Furthermore, no person shall at a meeting use offensive, intemperate, inflammatory, sarcastic or provocative language or language to which those listening could reasonably take offence; or false or defamatory statements.

If, in the opinion of the Chair, any person has broken or disregarded this provision, the Chair shall express that opinion to the Council and thereafter any member may move that the person named be no longer heard or that the person named leave the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forthwith and without discussion. If either of the motions mentioned is disobeyed, the Chair may suspend the meeting or take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce them.