

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS POLICY

In preparing this policy, the Parish Council has referred to guidance provided by NALC.

A Parish Council meeting is not a public meeting, but a meeting that is held in public. There is no requirement in law to provide a public forum but this council welcomes the opportunity to offer this facility.

All members of the public have a statutory right to attend council meetings as observers, but as part of our commitment to community engagement, we also choose to set aside time at each meeting, to hold a public forum called "public participation".

Members of the public are very welcome to stay for the remainder of the Council meeting, as observers, but they will not be able to join in any subsequent discussions. If confidential items (e.g. staffing issues or items of a commercially sensitive nature) are discussed, members of the public may be excluded, following a resolution.

Public participation is one opportunity to ask questions. There are others, including telephoning or writing to the Parish Council or Parish Councillor, during normal office hours to ask a question.

All those present will act respectfully and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others. Offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated, and Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of and exclude anyone acting in this manner.

It is the responsibility of Members of the public to bring a copy of the agenda and any other information they require to the meeting. If they are unable to print an agenda, a request must be made to the Clerk 24 hours before the meeting takes place requesting a copy.

The following rules must be observed for public participation at meetings:

1. Public participation will be permitted at every Parish Council meeting.
2. Public participation will take place at the beginning of the meeting and will last for a maximum period of 15 minutes unless the Chairman wishes to use their discretion
3. In line with the Parish Council standing orders a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
4. The Chairman will determine in which order members of the public will be allowed to speak.
5. A written copy of the question must be handed to the Parish Clerk by 12 noon the day before the meeting. The length of the question should not exceed 65 words.
6. Should the question have not been previously submitted, the Parish Council reserves the right to refuse the question or request it is put in writing to be answered at the following meeting.
7. Only a written question will be included in the minutes of the meeting along with the name of the Requester. If the resident wishes to remain anonymous then the question will not be recorded in the minutes.
8. Each member of the public will be allowed to make representations or ask questions.

9. If the member of the public does not have access to the internet, they may contact a Parish Councillor or the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting.
10. Questions will be answered in one of the following ways:
 - When an answer can be given immediately, the answer will be included within the minutes.
 - When an answer requires research to be undertaken, the answer will be included within the minutes as soon as it is available and adopted at the next Council meeting
 - When an answer still cannot be answered prior to the following Council meeting, an update will be included at the next available meeting.
11. The Chairman, or Clerk, may reject a question or a supplementary question if it is not about a matter over which the council has responsibility, it is defamatory, frivolous, abusive, or substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the council in the past 6 months or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information. Where a question has been rejected a letter will be sent to the questioner setting out the reasons for the rejection providing contact details have been submitted.
12. If any person submits more than one question at any meeting, only their first question shall be asked and answered. If after all other questions have been asked and answered there is sufficient time available, the Chairman may ask the questioner(s) to ask their further question(s) in such order as the Chairman determines.
13. Councils and other local government bodies are required to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. While no prior permission is required to carry out this activity, it is courtesy to inform those present that there is an intention to film or audio-record a public meeting.

Guidance notes for members of the public:- Make the most of your three minutes by preparing notes carefully. If several people want to speak on the same item try to get together in advance to choose the best person to speak for you all.

AGREED BY SNHPC

Chairman: *Wayne Smith*

Date: *02/11/2021*