



FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME - GUIDANCE

Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to come along to the Town Council meetings. In fact by law members of the public must be admitted to all meetings of the full council and its committees. However, the law does not allow members of the public to take part in the debates.

This council, like many other parish and town councils in England and Wales, gives members of the public an opportunity to speak at some point during the meeting. We do this by temporarily adjourning the meeting as near to the beginning of the meeting as possible after the formalities of the agenda (a copy of which is available for your information and which the Town Clerk will provide you with), to allow the public plus our District and County Councillors an opportunity to speak. It is important for you to study the agenda so that when the opportunity occurs you can make the best use of your time. You are very welcome to remain for the rest of the meeting, or leave as soon as you have spoken, this is entirely your choice and the Town Council welcomes attendance at council meetings.

If you wish to raise a point which does not relate to an item on that evening's agenda you are free to do so. However, the council's discussion of the point might have to be delayed until a subsequent meeting as the council is unable to make a decision binding in law (this is particularly relevant to financial decisions), unless a specific item is included on the agenda.

Members of the council are always willing to discuss topics put forward by the public. Our agenda is prepared about a week before the next council meeting so you will need to inform the Town Clerk or Chairman about ten days prior to the meeting. Although this might seem a long time in advance the council is required by law to publicise its agenda at least three clear days before each meeting; these days do not include the day of issue or the day of the meeting.

Here are some guidelines:

- The Chairman controls this session, other Councillors do not participate.
- The Chairman will suspend Standing Orders allowing members of the public to speak during the Council meeting. *This is only permitted via a resolution of the Council.*

- The Chairman will request each speaker to identify themselves and give their address or representative body.
- Each speaker can speak for up to 3 minutes or as decided by the Chairman (*if there is a keen interest in an issue, it is sensible for a spokesperson to be identified to speak rather than the same point being repeated*).
- A person should raise his/her hand when wishing to ask a question and then stand when speaking (except, of course, if that person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). Before speaking, it is helpful if that person gives his/her name.
- The question should be directed to the Chairman. It might be that the Chairman invites the Town Clerk to respond to your questions.
- Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman shall direct in which order this will be.

The rules on how meetings are run is set out in the Town Council's Standing Orders which can be downloaded from the Council's website or from the Council office.

We hope that you find the meeting useful and if you have any queries please contact the Town Clerk.