



WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings.

Members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Council as observers.

Members of the public **have no legal right** to speak unless the Parish Council Chairman authorises them to do so.

Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council, and the Council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public.

As a matter of best practice, to enable members of the public to address the council on any subject 'Public Participation' will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors.

Adjournment for Public Participation

For the Agenda item Public Participation, the Mayor/Chair will adjourn the meeting to enable the public to use the allotted time, maximum 15 minutes, 3 minutes per speaker to speak on any subject they wish to bring before the council.

Meeting Reconvened

After the Public Participation allotted time of 15 minutes the meeting will reconvene.

Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting after the public participation session as observers but will not be able to join in the discussion for the rest of the meeting.

Exclusion from the meeting

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).

RULES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Members of the Public may address the Council on any subject they so wish during the Public Participation when the Chair has adjourned the meeting and invited them in turn to speak.

It is preferred but not essential that a request to speak should be submitted to the Clerk at least 48 hours before the meeting with the indication of the subject they wish to speak about and when possible a written copy of the points they wish to raise.

Public Participation is not open to debate.

Allotted time

Public Participation shall not exceed 15 minutes unless by special concession of the Chair of the meeting.

The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 3 minutes.

If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic, they should nominate one person to speak on their behalf.

This will avoid duplication and make the best use of the time set aside for Public Participation.

Information handouts brought to the meeting should be placed on the table provided to avoid delaying or disrupting the meeting.

Inappropriate question or statement

The Chair has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and not be acceptable and stop the speaker from continuing to speak.

If the speaker ignores the requests of the Chair, they will be asked to leave the meeting, if they refuse to leave the meeting, the Police may be called upon to remove them from the meeting.

Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should respond to comments received by members of the public during public participation. If the topic they are speaking about is an agenda item, it will be debated using the correct process when the item is discussed.

Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the Council and/or Committee agendas.

Members of the public do not have a right to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.

A question raised by a member of the public during Public Participation shall not require a response and there will be no debate or discussion by Councillors. The Chair will direct this.

All person's present will act respectfully towards every other person in attendance. They must not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens, or intimidates another person.

All statements, questions, responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made appropriately and politely.

All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature.

There should be no personal reference made to any person or persons identified at the meeting.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Offensive and/or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public disrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Council reserves the right to curtail their contribution.

If a member of the public persists in disrupting the meeting after receiving two warnings from the Chair, the third reminder will result in the person(s) causing the disruption to be asked to leave the meeting.

If a member of the public refuses to leave the meeting the Police will be called up to remove them.

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