



## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS POLICY**

A Parish/Town Council meeting is not a public meeting, but a meeting that is held in public. 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) are discussed, members of the public may be excluded.

Public participation is one opportunity to ask questions. There are others, including telephoning or writing to the Town Council or Town 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.

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

1. Public participation will be permitted at the Full Town Council meeting which is held on the first Thursday of each month.
2. Public participation will take place at the beginning of the meeting and will last for a maximum period of 30 minutes unless the Chairperson wishes to use his/her discretion
3. In line with the Town Council standing orders a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
4. The Chairperson will determine in which order members of the public will be allowed to speak.
5. Each member of the public will be allowed to make representations or ask questions.
6. 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.

7. The Chairperson, 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.