

A Guide for the members of the public wishing to contribute to agenda item Public Participation

1 Purpose Of This Guide

The Council's policy on public participation at meetings is defined in our Standing Orders, but that is a rather lengthy and formal document. This guide describes how public participation works in a more informal way.

2 Which Meetings Are Open To The Public?

Every meeting of the Council is open to the press and public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest because the business to be transacted is confidential or for some other special reasons. The exclusion of the press and public from any part of a meeting has to be agreed by a resolution of the Council, and the reasons for the exclusion must be given.

3 Public Speaking

While there is no right in law for members of the public to speak at Council meetings, the chairman of the meeting may allow the public to speak at his/her discretion. A period for public participation is provided shortly after the beginning of each Council meeting.

4 Procedure

- If you want to speak at a meeting, it is requested that you notify the Parish Clerk by the end of business on the Monday preceding the meeting. You should outline the question/s you will be raising. This allows time for the Clerk to make any necessary enquiries prior to the meeting.
- You will be allowed to speak at the discretion of the chair.
- If you do not want your name to be recorded in the minutes, please inform the chair before you start.
- More than one question may be asked by an individual questioner subject to the time limit of 5 minutes per speaker.

5 What Are The Rules For Speaking?

- The Chair will invite you to stand/sit where you can be clearly heard.
- You can speak for a maximum of 5 minutes unless the chair directs otherwise.
- The total period for public participation is limited to a maximum of 15 minutes unless the chair directs otherwise – this may be subject to other business to be transacted at the meeting and dependant on the number of attendees wishing to speak under this item.
- The Council may respond to you at the meeting or may write to you at a later date.
- No debate will take place during the period for public participation.
- Councillors may debate any matter you have raised later in the meeting, but only if it is on the agenda.

6 Behaviour

- Please do not interrupt speakers or speak during the members' debate.
- Please do not hold conversations with other members of the public while the meeting is in progress.
- The chair will ask members of the public who become disruptive to leave.
- If deemed necessary, the chair may request the support of Cumbria Constabulary in dealing with disruptive behaviour.