



BECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Policy on Public Participation in Formal Meetings

Background:

Beckington Parish Council recognises its responsibility to promote the democratic process and to listen, consult, inform and respond to the local community through many different forms of community engagement - just one of which is public participation in formal Council meetings. Unfortunately, the constraints of business do not permit a dialogue to be entered into at Council meetings. If members of the public wish to raise and discuss topics with the Council alternative ways to do so would be to engage with the Chairman, a Councillor or the Clerk outside of the formal meeting times, by letter, email, telephone or in person.

Objective:

The objectives of this policy are:

- 1 To encourage and promote public attendance at formal Council meetings and participation in the public speaking part of the meeting
- 2 To provide clear information for Members of the Council and the Public about the rules to be followed concerning public speaking at meetings

Council Meetings Public participation policy:

- 1 Meetings of the Parish Council are not Public meetings. They are meetings held in Public so that the community can observe the decision-making process. There is no requirement in law to provide an opportunity for the Public to question the Council or make oral representations at a meeting but Beckington Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a short public speaking session at all formal meetings.
- 2 The Public speaking time will take place at the beginning before the start of the formal meeting.
- 3 At Council meetings members of the Public may make representations about items on the agenda and may also ask questions of the Council which need not be about items on the agenda.
- 4 A member of the Public who wishes to speak should notify the Clerk to the meeting before the meeting commences and complete a short form with their contact details (the purpose of this form is to allow the council to provide a written response if necessary).
- 5 The period of time designated for Public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes in total unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting.
- 6 A member of the Public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- 7 The Chairman of the meeting will determine in what order members of the Public will be allowed to speak and whether questions to be asked are the same or similar to other questions already asked or answered.
- 8 The Chairman of the meeting will ensure that all members of the Public are heard politely and without interruption and shall ensure that abusive or offensive remarks or intemperate language is challenged.
- 9 A Question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given later. A written or oral response shall be provided within one week of the date of the meeting.
- 10 After the defined period of 15 minutes it must be clearly understood that the public may not participate at any other time during the Council meeting except in very exceptional cases when the meeting, by resolution of full Council agrees to suspend standing orders to allow a member of the Public to speak.


11 A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The Chairman of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.

12 A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the Chairman of the meeting

13 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking. Groups of people who wish to make representations or ask questions should nominate one speaker.

14 Photographing, audio-recording, use of social media and filming is permitted from the Public seating area during Council meetings; we ask that as a courtesy prior notice of this intent is provided to the Clerk before the commencement of the meeting.

15 The minutes of the meeting will record whether any Public participation has taken place, but will not record verbatim what was said. Names of the members of the Public maybe be recorded in the minutes but not their addresses.

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|  | Request to participate in Public speaking session at a meeting of Beckington Parish Council |
| Name: | |
| Email or postal address for further communications: | |
| Subject: | <i>Please indicate below the number of agenda item that you wish to make representations about or the topic about which you want to ask a question:</i> |
| Date: | |
| For internal use only: | |