

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT FULSTOW PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Parish council meetings are not public meetings but members of the public have a statutory right to attend as observers. During meetings they must observe the following :

- Members of the public have no legal right to speak. However, if required, Fulstow Parish Council will allow a 15 minute session for public participation at the beginning of its meetings when members of the public are invited to speak.
- Each member of the public is limited to a maximum of 5 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 public participation period.
- If members of the public wish to make written statements to be read out by the clerk, they must be received by the clerk at least 3 working days prior to the meeting.
- The council cannot make immediate decisions at the request of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda. If matters raised during the public participation are not on the agenda, they may be placed on the agenda for a future meeting at the discretion of the council.
- After the public participation, members of the public are welcome to stay for the council meeting as observers. They will not be able to participate in the discussion, or ask questions, unless invited to do so by the chairman. Members of the public who interrupt the meeting will be reminded that they are not allowed to speak, if they continue to interrupt they will be requested to leave. If interruptions continue the chairman or the clerk may call an end to the meeting.
- Members of the public will not be allowed to remain in the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues).
- Neither councillors nor the clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made during public participation. Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the council agenda, nor 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 an immediate response and there should be no debate or discussion between the council and the public. Members of the public are requested to leave their contact details with the clerk before leaving the council meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query.
- A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. But libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted. If the issue is on the agenda then it will be discussed under the appropriate item.
- Members of the public are not involved in the decision-making of the council.
- All person's present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others.
- All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely and must relate to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. There should be no reference to personal views on any person.
- Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and to exclude a disorderly person.
- The chairman has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.