PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS

This procedure is agreed as provided for in the Standing Orders for Meetings. Members of the public may speak at meetings of Councillors on the terms set out below.

1. FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

1.1 Members of the public may not speak at meetings of the full Council, except:

a) When presenting a petition in accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme; or

b) if the Council votes to suspend Standing Orders to enable them to do so.

2. APPEALS PANEL AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

2.1 This procedure does not apply to Appeals Panel or Licensing Sub-Committee meetings. Those Panels and Sub-Committees carry out quasi-judicial functions, and have agreed procedures laying down the rules under which members of the public may address them.

3. CABINET, COMMITTEE AND OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS (INCLUDING SUB-COMMITTEES OF THOSE BODIES EXCEPT LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES)

3.1 Members of the public may speak at formally convened meetings of the Cabinet, a Committee, or an Overview and Scrutiny Panel (including any formally constituted Sub-Committees of those bodies), under the rules set out below.

3.2 Where:

a) a meeting is to debate an issue which, in the opinion of the Chief Executive, is of extraordinary public interest; and

b) the Chief Executive is of the view that the rules in this procedure will not allow an adequate opportunity for public participation,

the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the body which is to debate the issue, may agree special arrangements for public participation on the issue.

3.3 Where, following consultation with the Chairman of the body which is to debate the issue, the Chief Executive is of the opinion that public participation in any or all of the items on the agenda for that meeting would be inappropriate or unnecessary, having regard to other opportunities for the public to express their views to Councillors, they may decide that public participation will not be permitted for all or any of the items on the agenda for that meeting.

3.4 Paragraphs 3.5 to 3.7 do not apply to Planning Committee meetings. See paragraphs 3.8 to 3.10 for the rules for that Committee.

3.5 Meetings at which the Public may Speak

3.5.1 Members of the public may not speak at the Annual Meeting (held in May) of the Cabinet, Committees or Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

3.5.2 Members of the public may speak at special meetings of these bodies, but only on items that are on the agenda for the meeting.

3.5.3 Members of the public may speak at any other ordinary or programmed meetings of these bodies, on any matter within the terms of reference of the body, whether or not the matter is on the agenda for the meeting.

3.6 Time at which Public may Speak

3.6.1 All public remarks not relating to an agenda item shall be made under the agenda item 'public participation'.

3.6.2 All public remarks relating to an agenda item shall be made immediately after the Chairman calls the relevant item, before members have started to debate it.

3.7 Rules and Time Limits for Public Participation

General rules

3.7.1 Time will be allocated on a first come, first served, basis. Members of the public are therefore encouraged to give as much notice as possible of their wish to speak and must do so no later than 12.00 noon, two clear working days before the meeting. For the avoidance of doubt, the deadline will be published on the agenda for the meeting.

3.7.2 No member of the public may speak for more than 3 minutes.

3.7.3 A member of the public may not speak more than once on the same subject at the same meeting, unless the Chairman of the meeting invites them to clarify their remarks.

3.7.4 Members of the public may not speak on items that are confidential or exempt from publication under legislation.

3.7.5 Members of the public may not participate in the Councillors' debate.

3.7.6 The Chairman of the meeting may rule that any public remarks are not appropriate and will not be accepted; for example if they are defamatory, insulting, frivolous or offensive. In such an instance the Chairman may disallow a person from speaking or continuing to speak.

Public participation not relating to an agenda item (3.6.1 above)

3.7.7 The public participation period not relating to agenda items shall not exceed 15 minutes.

Public participation on agenda items (3.6.2 above)

3.7.8 Where the public are speaking on an agenda item, the maximum time for public participation is 9 minutes, divided as follows:

Supporters of the recommendation in the report – 3 minutes

Objectors to the recommendation in the report – 3 minutes

Town or Parish Councils – 3 minutes.

The Chairman may limit the number of speakers from each of these three groups so that each person who is permitted to speak has an adequate opportunity to express their views. (As a guideline, three speakers from each group is normally the practical limit).

3.8 Planning Committee – Meetings at which the Public may Speak

3.8.1 Members of the public may not speak at the Annual Meeting of the Committee held in May.

3.8.2 Members of the public may speak at other meetings of the Committee, but only on items that are on the agenda for the meeting.

3.9 Planning Committee – Time at which Public may Speak

3.9.1 Initial remarks by members of the public and representatives of town and parish councils shall be made immediately after the Chairman calls the relevant agenda item and any essential additional update information has been given, before the Members start their debate.

3.9.2 Each public speaker may also exercise a right of reply, at the close of the debate, and before the vote is taken, in accordance with the rules set down in paragraph 3.10

3.10 Planning Committee – Rules and Time Limits for Public Participation

3.10.1 A member of the public may speak only if they:

a) have written to the Council, at least 10 days before the meeting, about the matter in question; and

b) have notified the Council of their wish to speak by 12.00 noon one clear working days before the date of the meeting.

3.10.2 No member of the public may speak for more than 3 minutes.

3.10.3 Each member of the public and representatives of town and parish councils may speak once at the start of the deliberation on a planning application and also speak again at the end of the debate, before the vote is taken. They may also respond to questions from Members of the Committee, but otherwise may not speak within the debate.

3.10.4 Members of the public may not speak on items that are confidential or exempt from publication under legislation.

3.10.5 Members of the public may not participate in the Councillors' debate.

3.10.6 Members of the public may not introduce new evidence at the meeting, or use visual display aids such as photographs or slides.

3.10.7 The Chairman of the meeting may rule that any public remarks are not appropriate and will not be accepted; for example if they are defamatory, insulting, frivolous or offensive. In such an instance the Chairman may disallow a person from speaking or continuing to speak.

3.10.8 The maximum time for public participation at the start of the item is 9 minutes, divided as follows:

Applicants/Agents/Supporters of the application – 3 minutes.
Objectors to the application – 3 minutes.
Town or Parish Councils – 3 minutes.

The Chairman may limit the number of speakers from each of these three groups so that each person who is permitted to speak has an adequate opportunity to express their views. (As a guideline, three speakers from each group is normally the practical limit).

3.10.9 At the end of the debate, before the mover and seconder of any motion before the Committee sum up and/or exercise their right of reply, the persons who have spoken in the initial public participation period may also sum up and reply to the debate in the following order:

Applicants/Agents/Supporters of the application – 1 minute.
Objectors to the application – 1 minute.
Town or Parish Councils – 1 minute.

3.11 Planning Committee – Local Ward Councillors

3.11.1 To provide for equitable public participation, the Chairman of the meeting may rule that Councillors who are not Committee Members (for example Local Ward Councillors), are limited to the time limits within these public participation rules.