

## **Public Participation**

Meetings of the parish council are not public meetings but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the council as observers. There are only two exceptions:

- (i) When Councillors have confidential matters to discuss and pass a resolution to move into a 'Part 2' (private) meeting which excludes the press and the general public.
- (ii) The Annual Parish Meeting or extraordinary Parish Meeting where only registered electors of the Parish are entitled to speak and vote.

Members of the public have no legal right to speak unless the chairman of the meeting authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, the parish council sets out a time for public participation near the beginning of its meetings when members of the public are invited to speak. This is a brief guide regarding public participation at Warfield Parish Council meetings.

## **General Principles**

Public participation sessions will be indicated on the agenda of open meetings of the council and its committees. Public participation may take the form of a direct address to members at the meeting or through a submitted statement in advance to the Clerk.

Members of the public may raise any topic during the public participation period. If the matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for a future meeting at the discretion of the Council.

Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting after the public session as observers, but will not be able to join in the discussion unless invited to do so by the chairman.

Members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues).

## **Rules of participation**

The session will be limited to a maximum time of 10 minutes.

The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 5 minutes.

If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic then they should nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of the public participation period.

Written statements must be received by the Clerk by no later than 12 noon, on the day prior to the meeting.

The Public Forum is an opportunity for members of the public to:

- (a) make representations,
- (b) answer questions or
- (c) give evidence relating to the business to be transacted.

The Chairman has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.

A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session will not receive a response at that time and there will be no debate or discussion between the Council and the public.

Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation.

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.

All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. There should be no reference to personal views on any person.

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.

If the issue is on the agenda then it will be discussed under the appropriate item. Members of the public are therefore requested to leave their contact details with the Clerk before leaving the council meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query.