

In preparing this Protocol the Parish Council has referred to guidance published by the National Association of Local councils (NALC).

Participation in the Public Forum by members of the public

A council meeting is not a public meeting, it is a meeting held in public. There is no requirement in law to provide a public forum but this council welcomes the opportunity to offer this facility.

We therefore invite members of the public and ward councillors to attend meetings and contribute within the public forum.

The public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct council business and interruptions during council business are not permitted.

The agenda indicates when the public participation will take place – this does not form part of the formal parish council meeting. It is held prior to the commencement of the meeting so that Parish Councillors may take into account any views expressed when reaching their decisions.

- Public participation will be for a period of **fifteen minutes**. Members of the public are able to raise issues of concern, though only items on the agenda will be considered by the council at the meeting.
- Statements will be allowed on matters affecting the parish council during the allocated public forum. The issue must be relevant to the business of the parish council and will not receive a response or a debate by the parish council during Public Forum. If the matter is an agenda item it will be debated within the formal parish council meeting.
- Issues raised which are not matters on the agenda will be noted and answered at a later stage or if a decision by the parish council is required, may be added to the agenda of the next meeting.
- Each individual will only be allowed to speak once and shall be restricted to 3 minutes. Only one person may speak on a particular topic. If several people want to speak on the same item try to get together in advance to choose the best person to speak for you all. This avoids duplication and makes the best use of the time allocated to public participation. Two people may speak if opposing views are being expressed i.e. one for and one against a particular matter.
- No question may be repeated within a 6 month period.
- Neither councillors nor the clerk should be put under any pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. Members of the public do not have the right to force items onto the council agenda nor insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.
- A brief record of the topics raised at public participation will be included within the minutes of that meeting. Offensive or discriminatory comments will not be minuted.
- Any question which the chairman considers improper, irrelevant or objectionable shall be disallowed. 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 exclude a disorderly person.