

Cound Parish Council

Public Participation Protocol



Adopted:
Review Due:

November 2021
November 2023

Public Participation Sessions at Parish Council Meetings

Meetings of Cound Parish Council are not public meetings, but members of the public have a statutory right to attend as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Chairman authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Cound Parish Council has set out a time for public participation when members of the public are invited to speak.

The public participation session is an opportunity for members of the public to (i) make representations, (ii) answer questions or (iii) give evidence relating to the business to be conducted. If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting (see Rule 5) these may become an agenda item for a future meeting at the discretion of the parish council. Members of the public are welcome to stay, as observers, for the remainder of the meeting after the public session 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

1. The public participation session will take place early on the meeting agenda so that councillors may take into account any views expressed when reaching decisions regarding agenda items.
2. The public participation session will be limited to a maximum time of 15 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
3. The time for each member of the public to speak is strictly limited to 5 minutes.
4. 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 time allocated for public participation.
5. Public participation is permitted regarding items on any topic within the remit of the parish council. However, if a matter does not appear on the agenda, a written request should be submitted to the Clerk no later than 2 working days before the meeting.
6. The Chairman has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.
7. Neither councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made during public participation.
8. Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto Cound Parish Council's agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.
9. A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session shall not require a response and there should be no debate or discussion between Cound Parish Council and the public.
10. A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. However, libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.
11. If an issue raised in public participation is on the agenda, then it will be discussed by the councillors under the appropriate item.
12. All persons present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates him or her. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.

13. All communication at meetings shall be through the Chairman.
 - a. Councillors may not address questions raised by members of the public except through, and with the permission of, the Chairman.
 - b. Members of the public may not address individual councillors except through, and with the permission of, the Chairman.
14. 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. Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting, Cound Parish Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person.
15. All councillors and members of the public must respect the role of the Chairman and may be asked to leave if, in the opinion of the Chairman, they breach this protocol in a way that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.
16. Cound Parish Council is an apolitical forum and no exceptions or attempts to circumvent that will be tolerated.
17. Cound Parish Council will provide an opportunity via the agenda for the police and ward councillors to attend and report to meetings and respond to any questions or queries from the parish council.

This Public Participation Protocol was approved by a full meeting of Cound Parish Council on 18 November 2021 (Minute Ref: 80.21)

Signed:
Chairman