

Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Purpose	To set out a Code of Practice
Scope	All
Date adopted	
Minute Ref:	
Previous	
Next Review	
Policy Owner	Full Council
Supersedes	None

1. Introduction

1.1 Laverstock & Ford Parish Council welcomes members of the public to all of its meetings, and to meetings of standing committees. 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. They have no legal right to speak unless the Chair authorises them to do so.

1.2 The public participation time is an opportunity for members of the public to (a) make representations, (b) ask 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.

1.3 Neither the Chair, Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments or questions made in the public forum.

1.4 The public participation time is not an opportunity to raise complaints. These should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Council and will be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure.

2. Transparency and community engagement

2.1 In an effort to be transparent, and as part of its community engagement, the Council has set aside a period of 15 minutes before the start of the meeting when members of the public are invited to speak.

2.2 The Council will not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda. If 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.

2.3 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 specifically invited to do so by the Chair.

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

3. Rules

3.1 In accordance with Standing Orders 3f(e) the period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting.

3.2 Subject to standing order 3g(f) a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.

3.3 If a number of members of the public wish 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.

3.4. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chair of the meeting.

3.5. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.

3.6. Written statements must be received by the Clerk in advance, at least three clear working days prior to the meeting.

3.7. 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.

3.8 A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given after the meeting.

3.9. A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. Libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.

3.10 If the issue is on the agenda then it will be discussed under the appropriate item (which may be moved with the agreement of the Council to accommodate the discussion).

3.11 All those at the meeting will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates them. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made calmly and politely.

3.12. All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature.