Atworth Parish Council

Approved November 2021

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

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 Parish Council Chairman authorises them to do so.**

However, as part of its community engagement, Atworth Parish Council sets out a time for public participation near the beginning of its meetings when members of the public are invited to speak.

Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council. The Council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda. As a matter of best practice, the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors.

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.

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

- This session will be limited to a maximum time of 15 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 at least 3 days prior to the meeting.
- Any member of the Council, who has declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on an item to be discussed, will be allowed the same rights and time as a member of the public for this session.
- 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.
- Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. 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.
- 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 the Council and the public.
- 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.
- 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
- A person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he is present at the meeting of a parish council or its committees but may:

- Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.
- 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.
- 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 the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and to exclude a disorderly person