



# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS POLICY**

**Adopted:** 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Review:** May 2023

Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings but members of the public are very welcome to attend as observers, as is their statutory right. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chairman authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Datchworth Parish Council sets out a time for public participation as part of the agenda. This is an agreed time when members of the public are invited to speak.

Members of the public are not involved in the decision-making of the Council. 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.


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.


There will be an area for members of the public to sit in the designated meeting room, which may be limited due to the necessary spacing required to adhere to the Government's guidelines in relation to COVID-19. Admittance to meetings is on a 'first come, first served' basis and public access will be from 10 minutes before the start time of the meeting.


All Council meetings start at 7pm unless otherwise stated. A copy of the agenda and meeting items will be available for all our meetings from Agendas, reports and minutes <https://datchworth-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/parish-council-meetings>


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 as set by Council (normally 15 minutes).


 The time for each member of the public to speak may be limited depending on the number of people wishing to speak (normally 3 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.

 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 will 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. However, libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.



If the matter of interest 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.



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.



No paperwork/plans/photographs are allowed to be circulated by a speaker at the meeting. This must be done in advance of the date of the meeting if they wish the members to consider information other than that which is contained in the agenda papers.



Speakers must be aware that their contribution is likely to be recorded. Under the 'Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014' there is an obligation on the Council to allow filming /recording of meetings as long as it is not disruptive.



Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with our 'Filming or Recording Meetings Policy'.**

This policy will be reviewed every year or earlier if so required by legislation or additional material.

Date of policy: May 2022

Approving committee: Full Council

Date of committee meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Policy version reference: V2

Supersedes: May 2021

Policy effective from: 24/5/22

Date for next review: May 2023