



Public Participation in Formal Council and Committee Meetings

Policy adopted August 2016

Review date August 2018

Policy on Public Participation in Formal Meetings

Background

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council recognises its responsibility to promote the democratic process and to listen, consult, inform and respond to the local community through many different forms of community engagement just one of which is public participation in formal council meetings. Unfortunately the constraints of business do not permit a dialogue to be entered into at public meetings. If members of the public wish to raise and discuss topics with the council alternative ways to do so can be found in the Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

Objective

The objectives of this policy are:

- 1** To encourage and promote public attendance at formal council and committee meetings and participation in the public speaking part of the meeting
- 2** To provide clear information for members of the council and the public about the rules to be followed concerning public speaking at meetings

Full Council and Committee Meetings

- 1** Meetings of the Town Council and its committees are not public meetings, they are meetings held in public so that the community can observe the decision making process. There is no requirement in law to provide an opportunity for the public to question the council or make oral representations at a meeting but BFSTC welcomes the opportunity to provide a short public speaking session at all formal meetings.
- 2** The public speaking time will take place near the beginning of the meeting.
- 3** At committee meetings members of the public may make representations about items on the agenda only.
- 4** At full council meetings members of the public may make representations about items on the agenda and may also ask questions of the council which need not be about items on the agenda.
- 5** A member of the public who wishes to speak should notify the clerk to the meeting before the meeting commences and complete a short form with their contact details (the purpose of this form is to allow the council to provide a written response if necessary).
- 6** The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) above shall not exceed **15** minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- 7** Subject to standing order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than **3** minutes.
- 8** The chair of the meeting will determine in what order members of the public will be allowed to speak and whether questions to be asked are the same or similar to other questions already asked or answered.
- 3** The chair of the meeting will ensure that all members of the public are heard politely and without interruption and shall ensure that guidelines on abusive or offensive remarks or intemperate language are observed.
- 9** In accordance with standing order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the

meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given. If an oral response cannot be given a written response shall be provided within one week of the date of the meeting.

- 10 After the defined period of 15 minutes it must be clearly understood that the public may not participate at any other time during the council meeting except in very exceptional cases when the meeting, by resolution of full council agrees to suspend standing orders to allow a member of the public to speak.
- 11 A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chairman of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- 12 A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairman of the meeting
- 13 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking. Groups of people who wish to make representations or ask questions should nominate one speaker.
- 14 Photographing, audio-recording, use of social media and filming is permitted from the public seating area during public meetings; we ask that as a courtesy prior notice of this intent is provided to the clerk before the commencement of the meeting. Reasonable facilities will be provided for this and for the press to take reports.
- 15 The minutes of the meeting will record whether any public participation has taken place. Names of members of the public and their addresses will not be recorded in the minutes.



**Request to participate in public speaking session at meeting of Bletchley and Fenny Town Council
(Please complete legibly)**

Name:

Email or postal address for further communications:

Subject:

Please indicate below the number of agenda item that you wish to make representations about or (in the case of a full council meeting only) the topic about which you want to ask a question:

Date:

For internal use only: