

FERRYHILL TOWN COUNCIL



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of a Town/Parish Council and its Committees

Importantly they have no right to participate in a meeting, unless permitted to do so by the Council.

Meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees are normally open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business or for some other special reason. Notices are placed in the press and on local notice boards informing the public of the dates and times. Agendas and reports are made available in advance of the meetings on the Council Website or at the Town Hall. Agendas are displayed on Council notice boards.

POLICY

- 1 Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in regard to any item of business included in the agenda of the Council and its Committees. Members of the public can submit a written question for the Council agenda as long as it is submitted 7 clear days (not including weekends, bank holidays and the day of the meeting) before the Council meeting date. Questions should relate either to the powers and duties of the Council, or affect the Parish in some way.
These will be entered into a register which will be open to the public for inspection.
- 2 A period of 15 minutes is allocated at each Council or Committee meeting for this purpose.
- 3 The Chair may reject a question if it:
 - Is not about a matter that Ferryhill Town Council is responsible for or doesn't affect the town,
 - Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive,
 - Refers to applications for or objections to planning permission or any licence, notice or order issued, served or made by the Council,
 - Is substantially the same question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past 6 months,
 - Concerns confidential or exempt information.
- 4 Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances or which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister.
- 5 Each person may speak once for 3 minutes only in respect of business itemised on the agenda.
- 6 A person shall raise his/her hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort. The Chair may at any time permit an individual to be seated when speaking

- 7 Any person speaking at a meeting shall address his/her comments to the Chair.
- 8 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chair shall direct the order of speaking.
- 9 A verbal question or statement concerning an item on the agenda asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a meeting will normally be taken into account during the subsequent discussion of that agenda item. However, the Chair may also direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an immediate oral response or to an employee for a oral or written response.
- 10 Written questions submitted to the Council meeting may be debated by members; however, no decision will be made solely on the comments and representations made under a public participation session. A matter raised that falls under the remit of a particular committee may be deferred to the next meeting of the relevant committee.