

MODBURY PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Adopted by Modbury Parish Council 14th September 2015 (Minute 15.115)

Reviewed and adopted by Modbury Parish Council 4th May 2021

Due for review May 2022

This protocol applies to: Participation in the public forum by members of the public

1 Introduction

1.1 Council Approach to Public Forum. This Council meets and makes its decisions in public and is committed to community engagement and therefore warmly invites members of the public, the press, the police and district and county councillors to attend meetings and contribute within the public forum. A council meeting is not a public meeting; it is a meeting held in public and there is no requirement in law to provide an opportunity for the public to question the council, but this council welcomes the opportunity to offer it.

1.2 Disruption to Council Meetings. Members of the public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct council business and interruptions during council business are not permitted. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the business of the meeting is disrupted in any way, the Chair will ask the person/s causing the disruption to be quiet and if they refuse then ask them to leave. Mobile phones must be switched off during the meeting.

1.3 Best Practice. This protocol has been developed based on best practice and recommendations from other Parish Councils and advice from the Local Government Association.

1.4 Reason for Protocol. Reflecting the fact that public discussion can occur on topics about which people care strongly, this protocol exists to ensure that the public forum is conducted politely and in a structured and unemotional way that comes to a conclusion within a reasonable timeframe.

2 Protocol

2.1 Duration. Public participation will be for a maximum period of 30 minutes.

2.2 Form of Questions. Written questions received in advance of the meeting are encouraged but not essential: if provided in advance this will make it easier for an answer to be prepared. If questions are not provided in advance then members of the public should be aware that the Chairman may be unable to answer those questions and defer that topic to a future date.

2.3 Time of public session. The agenda will indicate when the public participation will take place. This will be early on in the agenda so that councillors may take into account views expressed when reaching decisions.

2.4 Topics for Questions. Public participation is permitted regarding items on the agenda.

2.5 Provision of responses. If the question relates to a topic on the agenda then the Chairman may decide to address it immediately or carry it forward for a response at a later date depending upon whether the question needs a quick response.

2.6 Discussion of topics by councillors. Members of the public should note that the council is only allowed to take decisions committing the council on topics that are publicised on the agenda, except where a response has a deadline prior to the next scheduled meeting of the

council. Therefore, the council will not enter into any substantive discussion on a question raised if it is unable to answer a question directly.

2.7 Duration of each question. A maximum of 3 minutes is permitted for a member of the public to ask a question. If members of the public wish for a more detailed dialogue than the 3 minutes allowed on a question then they should contact the Chairman or any other councillor for an individual discussion: the parish council meeting is not the correct forum for conducting debates between councillors and members of the public. Supplementary comments or questions are solely at the discretion of the Chairman.

2.8 Other Ways to ask Questions. Members of the public should be aware that rather than bringing questions to the entire council and other members of the public attending, questions may be addressed either via the Clerk during business hours or via email, through one of your local parish councillors or in the confidential surgery with councillors between 10AM and 11AM on Saturday mornings in the council office. The agenda is subject to the approval of the Chair.

2.9 Role of Chair. All communication shall be through the Chair. Councillors may not address questions raised by members of the public except through and with the permission of the Chair. Members of the public may not address individual councillors except through, and with the permission of the Chair. The Chair's decision is final on public participation. Councillors and members of the public must respect the role of the Chair and may be asked to leave if in the opinion of the Chair they breach this protocol in a way that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.

3 Other Points

3.1 Guidance. Members of the public are recommended to make the most of the 3 minutes by preparing notes carefully. If several people want to introduce the same question, it would be helpful where possible, to get together in advance to pool your thoughts and choose the best person to speak for you all.

3.2 Participation by Councillors and Police. This council will provide an opportunity via the agenda for the police, District and County Councillors to attend and report to meetings and respond to any questions or queries from Council.

3.3 Discretion of Chair. The Chair may, in exceptional circumstances, at his or her discretion, invite a member of the public to speak on an agenda item during the parish council meeting if, in the opinion of the Chair, that individual has relevant information not available to the parish council which will help in its deliberations.

PLEASE TURN OFF MOBILE PHONES DURING MEETINGS.