



SHERFIELD ON LODDON

PARISH COUNCIL

Public participation at meetings policy

A Parish Council meeting is not a public meeting, but a meeting that is held in public. All members of the public have a statutory right to attend council meetings as observers, but as part of our commitment to community engagement, we also choose to set aside time at each meeting, to hold a public forum called “public participation”.

Members of the public are very welcome to stay for the remainder of the Council meeting, as observers, but they will not be able to join in any subsequent discussions. If confidential items (e.g. staffing issues) are discussed, members of the public may be excluded.

Public participation is one opportunity to ask questions. There are others, including telephoning or writing to the Parish Council or Parish Councillor, during normal office hours to ask a question.

All those present will act respectfully and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others. Offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated, and Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of and exclude anyone acting in this manner.

The following rules must be observed for public participation at meetings.

1. Public participation will be permitted at every Parish Council meeting.
2. Public participation will take place towards the beginning of the meeting and will last for a maximum period of 15 minutes unless the Chairman wishes to use his/her discretion.
3. In line with the Parish Council standing orders a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
4. The Chairman will determine in which order members of the public will be allowed to speak.
5. Each member of the public will be allowed to make representations or ask questions.



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6. If the member of the public does not have access to the internet, they may contact a Parish Councillor or Clerk prior to the meeting.
7. Questions will be answered in one of the following ways:
 - When an answer can be given immediately, the answer will be given.
 - When an answer requires research to be undertaken over a period of up to 4 weeks, the answer, as soon as it is available will be communicated to the resident asking the question,
 - When an answer still cannot be answered by the following Council meeting then an update will be included at the next available meeting.
8. The chairman may reject a question or a supplementary question, if it is not about a matter over which the council has responsibility, it is defamatory, frivolous, abusive or substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the council in the past 6 months or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information. Where a question has been rejected a letter will be sent to the questioner setting out the reasons for the rejection providing contact details have been submitted.
9. If any person asks more than one question at any meeting, only their first question shall be asked and answered. If after all other questions have been asked and answered there is sufficient time available, the Chairman of the Council may ask the questioner(s) to ask their further question(s) in such order as the Chairman determines.
10. Councils and other local government bodies are required to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. While no prior permission is required to carry out this activity, it is courtesy to inform those present that there is an intention to film or audio- record a public meeting.
11. Only a written question will be included in the minutes of the meeting.