



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL MEETINGS

### WRITTEN BY:

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### INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council understands it is essential for members of the public to play an active role in decision-making within their communities. Some individuals or groups may wish to speak to Councillors or Officers privately. However, the Town Council also offers the opportunity for member of the public to participate in meetings.

1.2 All meetings are open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. It must be noted that a Council meeting is not a public meeting; it is a meeting held in public.

1.3 Biddulph Town Council is committed to community engagement and therefore warmly invites members of the public to contribute to meetings under the listed agenda item 'Public Participation.' It is a useful way for Councillors to hear directly from their local electors.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide clarity about the role of members of the public in Town Council meetings.

2.2 The Town Council aims to ensure that the public forum is conducted politely and in a structured, unemotional way that comes to a conclusion within a reasonable timeframe.

## PROVISIONS

### 3.1 WHAT CAN I DO?

- Public participation time is an opportunity for you to raise issues of concern or interest – you may ask a question, make a statement, be a deputation or present a petition.
- You can participate at the beginning of Town Council meetings which meet monthly on each second Tuesday in the Council Chamber at Biddulph Town Hall at 6 pm.
- Participation should relate to matters where the Council has powers or duties or which directly affects the town. The Mayor will not allow any participation of a private nature which is unrelated to the business of the Town Council.

### 3.2 HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

- A request to participate must be made in writing to the Chief Officer at least seven days prior to the date of the meeting (i.e. received by noon on the preceding Wednesday).
- You will be invited to address the Mayor who may ask an appropriate Councillor or officer to reply in the case of a question.
- A deputation should not exceed the seating capacity of the Chamber (i.e. twenty-five); only one person should speak.

### 3.3 HOW LONG DO I HAVE?

- A maximum 20 minutes will be allowed for participation at the start of the meetings. Each question/statement should not exceed 5 minutes, but can be exceeded at the discretion of the Mayor.
- The Mayor may permit supplementary questions relating to the original question, taking account of the length of your original question and answer and any other anticipated public participation.

### 3.4 WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

- When you ask a question, the answer may take the form of:
  - ✓ a direct oral response; or

- ✓ where relevant information is contained in a publication of the Council, reference to that publication; or
- ✓ where the reply to your question cannot conveniently be given orally, an undertaking to provide a written answer.
- When you make a statement, present a petition or are part of a deputation, the Chairman may allow a brief response. Alternatively the issue you have raised may be referred to an appropriate meeting for debate and any Councillor may propose this.
- The minutes of the meeting will summarise the main points of public participation proceedings.

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 Information in relation to public participation is set out in the Town Council's Standing Orders.

4.2 All members of the public and press are welcome to attend meetings of Biddulph Town Council and have a legal right to do so under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.