

## Public Participation at Church Eaton Parish Council Meetings

As part of its community engagement, Church Eaton Parish Council has an Open Forum item on its meeting Agenda. The Parish Council is keen to encourage the Public to attend all of the Parish Council Meeting and to use the Open Forum as an opportunity to engage with them.

During Open Forum, the Parish Council meeting is suspended, to allow the Public to speak. This provides the opportunity for the Public to make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to Agenda items. It also affords the opportunity to bring other matters to the attention of the Parish Council. Sometimes, it may be beneficial to inform the Clerk of matters to be raised, so that Councillors have the opportunity to give better informed support. This is optional.

Councillors will try to provide help and support on matters raised but there may be occasions when the Chair and Clerk need to take note of what is being said, and make a response after the meeting. Alternatively, the subject might be worthy of inclusion on the Agenda for a future meeting, at the discretion of the Council.

Members of the Public are asked to give their contact details to the Clerk before leaving the meeting, if they wish to receive a follow-up reply to their query.

The Public are welcome and encouraged to stay for the full Parish Council meeting. This is a statutory right but they are observers and will not be able to join in the discussion, unless invited to do so by the Chair.

### Open Forum Guidance for the Public

- It may be necessary to limit the time for each topic to 5 minutes.
- If more than one member of the public wishes to express a common view on the same topic, then it may be best to nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of the public participation period.
- The Parish Council recognises that matters affecting the Public are likely to be emotional, nevertheless to ensure the best outcome:
  - Any statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely and respectfully, without intimidation.
  - Any statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature.
  - The Chair will highlight if this is not happening and request modification of behaviour.
- A Councillor may speak as a member of the Public, even if a declaration of interest has been made.
- Neither Councillors nor the Clerk shall be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under Public participation.
- Members of the Public may request, but do not have a right to force items onto the Agenda of a future Parish Council Meeting.
- Members of the Public do not have a right to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.
- A brief record of topics raised in Open Forum may be included in the minutes of that meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.
- Potentially libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments shall not be minuted but may be reported to an appropriate body (e.g. Police).

### Guidance for the Chair

The Open Forum session is normally informal, to encourage Public participation but at the discretion of the chair:

- The Open Forum session can be limited to a maximum time to be decided by the Chair of the meeting.
- The time for each member of the Public to speak may be limited to 5 minutes.
- If the topic is on the Agenda then it will be discussed by Councillors under that appropriate item, when the Parish council meeting has resumed.
- The Council has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.

The Parish Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution and/or exclude anyone they deem as being a disorderly person.