Public Participation at Parish Council Meetings

Members of the public have a legal right to attend the monthly Parish Council Meetings of Pailton Parish Council (PPC) as well as any Extraordinary or Committee meetings. Members of

the public may be excluded (by a resolution of the meeting) for specific items which need to be

discussed in confidence, for example but not limited to staffing matters, financial details

relating to individuals or tenders for contracts.

Members of the public have no legal right to speak at meetings of the Council. However PPC,

as part of its community engagement, sets aside time for public participation at meetings.

PPC has consulted with the National Association of Local Councils (“NALC”) and the following

information is for those members of the public wishing to address questions or comments to

the Parish Council.

1. Questions or comments from members of the public appear as an agenda item called

Public Participation for all Parish Council and Committee meetings). The item appears

at the start of the meeting so parishioners can raise any points they have regarding agenda items. The maximum time allowed for public speaking is 10 minutes. In the event of

several people wishing to speak either in favour or against the issue, the respective

group(s) will be requested to select one spokesperson to address the Council. One

person wishing to speak either in support or against the issue will be allowed to address

the Council even if no other person wishes to present an opposing argument.

2. Question(s) will be answered by the relevant Lead Councillor, the Chairman or the

Proper Officer of the Council following which the questioner will be allowed to ask one

supplementary question. If the supplementary question is not able to be answered at the

meeting, a written reply will be sent to the questioner as early as possible after the

meeting.

3. Councillors with a prejudicial interest in an agenda item will be allowed to speak during

this agenda item (and then leave the room when the item is considered).

4. Public participation is best used for issues where a decision will or could be made by the

Council at the meeting for items already on the agenda. Questions should ideally be

submitted to the Proper Officer of the Council three working days prior to the respective meeting.

This is to allow sufficient time for research and preparation of an appropriate response.

Questions may be submitted either in writing, by telephoning or by e-mail for the

respective meeting. It is important to note that the council is unable to make a decision

binding in law unless a specific item has been included on the agenda.

5. It is not a good use of time for members of the public to raise comments about matters

such as hedges, street lights, pot-holes and so forth during public participation unless

pertinent to a matter before the Council and contained in the agenda. Such areas of

concern should be raised with the Proper Officer, or lead Councillor for the

appropriate area to address.

6. It is undesirable to allow members of the public to speak throughout the meeting as this

runs the risk of confusing the roles of Councillors, who participate in the meeting, and

members of the public who observe. Members of the public will not be allowed to speak

during the debate by the Council. The Chairman may decide to adjourn the meeting

where Councillors express a wish to seek additional clarification from members of the

public.

7. Comments made during public participation will be (very briefly) minuted and will not

necessarily be a verbatim record. There is no need to minute the names of members of

the public who speak, but the Council will endeavour to do so where this is known.

8. Remarks of a libellous, offensive, discriminatory or otherwise unlawful nature will not be

minuted because PPC is liable for what is in its minutes even if someone else said it.

9. Neither Councillors, nor the Proper Officer, should feel under pressure to respond

immediately to comments made during public participation other than those which relate

to items on the agenda. A comment could be referred to the Proper Officer to write

to, or meet the speaker, or could form the basis for an agenda item at a future meeting.

Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto Parish Council meeting

agendas.

10. Members of the public should not heckle or otherwise disrupt proceedings and should

respect the rulings of the Chair. The Chairman of any meeting has an inherent right to

exclude a disorderly person. Members of the public have a legal right to be present so

excluding one or more of them will be a last resort. Alternatively if there is serious

disorder the Chairman may decide to adjourn the meeting for a short time to allow

people to calm down.