



WEST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY (Adopted [date])

INTRODUCTION

Meetings of West Hanningfield Parish Council are meetings held in public rather than public meetings. Members of the public therefore have a statutory right to attend and observe proceedings but do not have a legal right to speak unless invited to do so by the Chairman.

As part of its commitment to community engagement, the Parish Council provides an opportunity for members of the public to speak during a Public Forum which is included on the agenda for Council meetings.

The Public Forum allows residents to raise matters of local concern or interest. However, no formal decisions can be taken on matters raised during the Public Forum unless the matter is already included on the agenda for that meeting. Matters raised may be referred for consideration at a future meeting at the discretion of the Chairman in consultation with the Clerk.

Members of the public may remain for the remainder of the meeting as observers but may not participate in discussion unless invited to do so by the Chairman.

The Council may resolve to exclude the public from specific items where confidential matters are to be discussed (for example staffing matters, tenders or legal issues) in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

PUBLIC FORUM RULES

- The Public Forum will normally take place at the beginning of the meeting and will be limited to a maximum period determined by the Council.
- Each member of the public wishing to speak will normally be limited to a maximum of five minutes.
- The Chairman will determine the order in which speakers are heard.
- Where several members of the public wish to speak on the same topic, they may be asked to nominate one person to speak on behalf of the group in order to make best use of the time available.
- Written statements should be submitted to the Clerk in advance of the meeting where possible.
- Members of the public are not permitted to address individual councillors directly. All remarks must be addressed through the Chairman.

- Questions raised during the Public Forum do not require a response at the meeting and there will normally be no debate between councillors and members of the public at this stage.
- A brief summary of topics raised during the Public Forum may be included in the minutes of the meeting. Libellous, offensive or discriminatory comments will not be recorded.
- Members of the public do not have the right to require that their statements are recorded verbatim in the minutes.

RECORDING OF MEETINGS

Members of the public and press are permitted to record, photograph or film Council meetings in accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, provided this does not disrupt the meeting.

Members of the public who do not wish to be recorded should take appropriate steps such as seating themselves away from recording equipment, or refraining from speaking during the meeting. The Council cannot prevent lawful recording of meetings held in public.

CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

All persons present at the meeting are expected to behave respectfully towards others. Statements, questions, complaints or criticisms must be made politely and respectfully.

The Chairman has responsibility for maintaining order at the meeting. If a person interrupts the proceedings, behaves in an inappropriate or disruptive manner, or uses threatening or offensive language, the Chairman may require that person to stop speaking and, if necessary, request that they leave the meeting.

Lucy White
Parish Clerk