



ST LEONARDS & ST IVES PARISH COUNCIL

Public Speaking at Meetings Policy

Policy No: 14

Public Speaking at the Meetings of St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council adopted 25.10.17 Min.158

The Parish Council is an independent corporate body with only two Members of staff. It can only act when it has the power afforded to it under statute. It acts independently of the County and District Councils. The Parish Council consists of 13 Parish Councillors. The Parish Council is required to act in accordance with Statute and must conduct its business in accordance with the duly adopted Standing Orders of the Parish Council. In the interests of transparency and in accordance with the law, it can only discuss items on a published agenda which has been circulated 3 clear working days before. Meetings of the Parish Council are required to be open to the press and public but this does not mean that the public can join in with the debate of the Council on individual items. Meetings of the Council are scheduled at least a year in advance and the statutory business of the Council must take precedence to be concluded within strict time frames.

The public can only speak at the beginning of the meeting as clearly defined on the agenda as “Public Open Forum” or when at the discretion of the Chairman the meeting is suspended temporarily for them to do so. Members of the Public may ask questions during this section of the meeting but it may not always be possible to give a direct answer at that time. The period of the Public Open Forum is clearly defined and is only a limited section of the meeting. The meeting must convene punctually to ensure the conclusion of the rest of the business on the agenda.

The Council reserves the right to request the public generally or an individual to leave the room if the business is prevented from being conducted by their behaviour or when a resolution is passed specifically excluding them for reasons of the confidential nature of the business to be concluded.

Before speaking you will be asked for your name and address.

How long can I speak for?

The Council will enable up to two speakers for and two speakers against any proposal. The maximum time of speaking is 2 minutes per person. Where an issue arises which will result in a considerable amount of public interest at the discretion of the Chairman the amount of time afforded to each category of speaker may be increased at the Chairman's discretion. If a group attends the meeting to speak on an issue they will be asked to nominate up to 2 spokespersons to represent them all. If a number of people attend and wish to speak on different proposals on the agenda the time for speaking may be reduced or the public forum extended to cater for this, but this is at the discretion of the Chairman. The Chairman's role is to ensure that the publicly advertised business on the agenda is concluded and that order is maintained to allow the Council to do so. Standing Orders require meetings do not exceed 2 hours, business not concluded after this time will be deferred to the next meeting and given priority on the next agenda.

Time limits will be strictly observed and interruptions will not be allowed. You will not be allowed to complete your presentation if the time limit expires. The Chairman's direction will be final and will be indicated by use of the Chairman's gavel. All statements should be directed through the Chair.

What may I speak about?

Speeches must be in the form of statements and may include questions however, it is not always possible to give a direct response at the time. The Council reserves the right to request such questions to be put in writing or email for a formal response. Statements must be factual and not be defamatory or offensive in nature. Additional materials such as photographs will only be circulated at the discretion of the Chairman provided the other category of speaker is also permitted sight of the same and has no objection to them, sufficient copies should be provided to allow for circulation and may be limited to a specific number. The Council reserves the right to refuse the request for circulation.

In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman or a Councillor via the Chair, may ask for further clarification of a point of fact. In which case the meeting will temporarily close for the public to respond. Any response however, must be kept as succinct and factual as possible, this is not the opportunity to enter into a full discussion with the Council and the Chairman may ask for you to cease at any time. You must not speak further once the meeting has resumed.

You are respectfully asked to leave as quietly as possible without speaking further to enable the meeting to continue.

Planning Meetings: The Planning Committee of the Parish Council meets every three weeks. The Committee follows the same rules as above, however the public may make representations on each application which may mean that the public speaking section takes longer than the 10 minutes scheduled. The order of speaking will be objectors first followed by any supporters or the applicant. The order of business will be at the discretion of the Chairman. You are asked to keep your speech factual and succinct and to cease if asked to do so by the Chairman. You must not interrupt the debate of the Council. The Parish is a consultee only the determination of the application is the remit of the Local Planning Authority. The Parish has only 21 days to respond, so no business can be deferred. On occasions it is necessary for an application to be responded to under delegated powers.

When considering their comments the Committee can only make their response on the basis of their planning merits.

Please ensure that you send any comments directly to the Local Planning Authority within their public consultation time constraints as we cannot be responsible for doing this for you.

Obtaining the Minutes:-

Minutes of the meetings are available on the Parish website but are not usually published until the subsequent agenda is available. In certain circumstances the Clerk may forward a draft extract prior to this date if contacted by email and on the authority of the Chairman.

Parish website: www.stleonardspc.org.uk

Email: office@stleonardspc.org.uk

The adopted Standing Orders of the Parish Council together with copies of duly adopted policies and the Code of Conduct is all available on the Parish Website, hardcopies are also available from the Parish Office.