



POLICY TITLE	Public Participation Policy (May 2020)
POLICY NO	025
APPROVED	Town Council 14.05.2020
REVISION DATE	
REVIEW DATE	2023
REPLACES POLICY	New Policy
POLICY AIM	This policy sets out the Town Council's stance regarding public participation at formal meetings and the procedures that are implemented to enable the public to raise matters at meetings of the Town Council and its committees.

1. Policy Statement

The Town Council welcomes the public attending the formal meetings of the Town Council and Its Committees and actively encourages people to raise issues and topics about the town. The Town Council, as part of its approach to community engagement chooses to have an agenda item at its formal meetings called "Public Participation" where members of the public can make representations, ask questions, answer questions and give evidence.

2. Overview

Members of the public have the right to attend, but no legal right to speak, at meetings of the Town Council and its committees, however the Town Council welcomes people's constructive contributions when they raise issues and topics about the town using the procedures set out in this policy and procedure document.

The Town Council's Standing Orders set the overarching principles for public participation at Town Council and Committee meetings, namely:

- Items raised at a full Town Council meeting may be on any topic relevant to Cullompton
- Items raised at a Committee meeting must be relevant to items on the agenda for that meeting
- Each member of the public may speak for a maximum of 3 continuous minutes

- The overall length of time for the public participation on an agenda is generally limited to 15 minutes – this includes the time for the members of the public to speak as well as for the responses to be given. The meeting Chairman may extend the time available for the public participation item but this is at their discretion and their decision is final.
- At a meeting of the full Town Council the Chairman (usually the Mayor) will decide whether the matter is to be referred to a Committee or if an oral or written response is to be given at a Town Council meeting.
- At a committee meeting the Chairman will decide whether an oral or written response is to be given
- The Chairman may direct that a response is not given if, in their opinion, the question / statement is defamatory, frivolous, abusive or has been previously raised at a meeting within the previous 6 months or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information. The Chairman’s ruling on this matter is final.
- Neither questions / statements etc. made by members of the public nor responses given will be the subject of further debate or discussion at the meeting.
- The Chairman, or any Committee Member may propose a motion under Standing Order 10 (xii) to not hear further from a member of the public , (xiii) to exclude a member of the public for disorderly conduct or any use any other appropriate Standing Order.

Public participation is not an appropriate time to

- complain about general problems such as routine maintenance of facilities
- demand information that is already publically available
- make complaints about individual members of staff (Please send the details of these direct to the Town Clerk)

PROCEDURE

Note: The arrangements may vary at the Town Council’s Planning Committee if

- a) an applicant wishes to speak about their planning application which is to be considered at the meeting
- b) if there are large numbers of people wishing to speak about the same planning application

Responses will not be given to comments or questions from members of the public on specific planning applications.

Before the Meeting

1. Any member of the public wishing to speak at a meeting is asked to contact the Town Council Offices at least 48 hours before the meeting starts to say that they will be attending the meeting and provide an overview of what they wish to speak about
2. Members of the public are encouraged to complete a public participation form which gives their contact details and brief information about what they are intending

to say at the meeting. The form is available from the Town Council Offices and the Town Council's website. Submission of a written question helps with managing the meeting, preparation of a response and minuting the meeting.

At the Meeting

1. Members of the public should sign in - an attendance sheet will be provided for this purpose
2. Public Participation will usually be an agenda item listed towards the start of the meeting
3. The meeting Chairman will decide the speaker order and call people to speak; Priority will usually be given to questions / statements submitted in advance and they will usually be taken in the order in which they were received.
4. Members of the public may speak for a maximum of 3 minutes during the public participation agenda item
5. The overall length of time for the public participation item on an agenda is generally limited to 15 minutes – this includes the time for the members of the public to speak as well as for the responses to be given. The meeting Chairman may extend the time available for the public participation item but this is at their discretion and their decision is final.
6. A member of the public speaking at a meeting must ask their question / address their comments to the meeting Chair.
7. The Chairman of the meeting may:
 - Direct that no response is required and that there will be no further communication on the matter
 - Provide a response or ask another present Councillor to do so
 - Direct that an oral or written response is to be given

An oral response will usually be given by an appropriate Town Councillor at the next appropriate meeting

A written response will usually be provided within 20 working days and a summary provided in the supporting papers for the next appropriate meeting

8. At a Town Council meeting the Chairman may refer the question to an appropriate committee.

During a meeting members of the public are asked to:

- Behave in an orderly and respectful manner and not heckle or otherwise disrupt the meeting
- Respect the rulings of the meeting Chair

During a meeting members of the public cannot:

- speak during Councillors debate or at any time other than during public participation unless expressly asked to do so by the meeting Chair
- vote on any proposals

After a Town Council Meeting

After a Town Council meeting the meeting administrator will notify a Committee Chairman and relevant Committee Administrator if any questions have been referred to it