

Sampford Brett Parish Council



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Public Attendance at Parish Council Meetings – Guidance

- Parish Council meetings are **not public meetings**, but members of the public have a **statutory right to attend as observers**.
- Members of the public **do not have a legal right to speak** during the meeting unless the **Chairman gives permission**.
- As part of good community engagement, the Council may include a **Public Participation session** at an agreed point in the meeting, during which members of the public are invited to speak.
- Public Participation is **separate from the formal Council meeting**. Members of the public must not take part in councillor debate, and the Council should **not make decisions** in response to public comments on items **not listed on the agenda**.
- After the public session, members of the public are welcome to remain as observers but **cannot join in discussions**.
- The Council may pass a resolution to **exclude the public** for specific confidential items (e.g., staffing matters, tenders, or legal issues).

Rules for Public Participation

- Public Participation will last no longer than 15 minutes, unless extended at the discretion of the Chair.
- Each member of the public may speak for up to 3 minutes.
- If several people wish to speak on the same topic, they should nominate one spokesperson to avoid repetition and make best use of the allotted time.
- Any information or handouts brought to the meeting must be placed on the designated table to avoid delaying or disrupting proceedings.
- The Chair may rule any question or statement inappropriate and may require the speaker to stop. If the speaker refuses to comply, they may be asked to leave. If they still refuse, the Police may be called to remove them.
- Councillors and the Clerk will not respond to comments made during Public Participation. If the topic is on the agenda, it will be dealt with through the proper meeting process.
- Members of the public cannot require the Council or its Committees to add items to an agenda.
- Members of the public cannot insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.
- Questions raised during Public Participation do not require a response, and there will be no debate by Councillors. The Chair will direct this.
- A brief record of topics raised will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
- All attendees must behave respectfully towards others. No behaviour that demeans, insults, threatens, or intimidates another person will be tolerated.
- All statements, questions, and responses must relate to the facts of the matter and must not be personal. No personal references to individuals will be permitted.

Behaviour at Meetings

Offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public disrupts the proceedings of any meeting, the Council reserves the right to curtail their contribution.

If a member of the public continues to disrupt the meeting after receiving two warnings from the Chair, a third warning will result in that person being asked to leave the meeting. If they refuse to leave when instructed, the Police will be called to remove them.

SAMPFORD BRETT PARISH COUNCIL

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