



PENRYN Town Council

Protocol for Public Speaking at Council Meetings

Members of the public have a legal right to attend meetings of a Town Council and its Committees, except where they are excluded (by a resolution of the meeting) for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence, for example, staffing matters or tenders for contracts. They have no legal right to speak at meetings of the Council or its Committees. However, as part of its community engagement a good Local Council will set aside time for public participation at meetings.

Penryn Town Council provides for public participation but it is not a good use of time for members of the public to complain about hedges, street lights, pot-holes and similar such issues during public participation. If members of the public wish to report issues such as this, they should contact the Town Council through the office or by writing to the Clerk. Public participation should be used for issues which are already on the agenda. This is because a Town Council is required to give a minimum of three working days' notice of any items to be discussed at a Council meeting in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12 Para 10(2)(b). If members of the public wish the Council to discuss issues which are not on the agenda, they should contact the Town Clerk who will consider, in consultation with the Chairman, whether an item can be added to a future agenda.

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 it. A specific time should be set aside for public participation and the Town Council's Standing Orders states that the total time will not exceed 30 minutes, with individual contributions being limited to three minutes. If there is a possibility that a large number of people will wish to speak, the Town Clerk will ask for a single representative to be appointed.

Comments made during public participation will be (very briefly) minuted; there will not be a verbatim record. Libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.

The public have a legal right to attend Council and Committee meetings but they do not have a right to disrupt them. Members of the public should not heckle or otherwise disrupt and should respect the rulings of the Chairman. The Chairman of any meeting has an inherent right to exclude a disorderly person. Alternatively, if there is serious disorder the Chairman could adjourn the meeting for a short time to

allow people to calm down. However, disorderly members of the public cannot be excluded from future meetings, nor can they be required to apologise before attending future meetings.

Procedures for public speaking at Council meetings

(These procedures apply to all formal meetings of the Council and its Committees with the exception of meeting of the Planning Committee)

1. Members of the public who wish to speak at a Council meeting must notify the Clerk in writing (by letter or email) of their request by the close of business on the day of the meeting. For clarity, in the case of the majority of Council meetings, the deadline will be 5.00 p.m.
2. Members of the public may only speak on items which are on the published agenda.
3. The total time allowed for public speaking will be 30 minutes with a maximum of three minutes per speaker.
4. If the total number of speakers exceeds ten, the Town Clerk will ask those speakers who wish to speak on the same agenda items to appoint a spokesperson. If an agreement cannot be reached, only the first ten speakers to register will be allowed to speak.
5. After a member of the public has spoken, Councillors will be permitted to ask questions for clarification only. There is no opportunity for debate at this point.
6. Comments made by the speakers will be briefly minuted.
7. Libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will be disregarded by the Council and will not be minuted.
8. Members of the public must not heckle or otherwise disrupt the meeting and must respect the rulings of the Chairman.
9. The Chairman has the right to exclude a disorderly person at any time or to adjourn the meeting to allow a serious disorder to be diffused.
10. The Chairman's decision is final and not open to debate.

Procedures for public speaking at meetings of the Planning Committee

Members of the Public

1. Members of the public who wish to speak at a meeting of the Planning Committee must notify the Clerk in writing (by letter or email) of their request by the close of business on the day of the meeting. For clarity, in the case of the majority of Planning Committee meetings which are held on a Tuesday, the deadline will be 5.00 p.m.
2. Members of the public may only speak on applications which are on the published agenda.
3. Members of the public who wish to speak on applications are encouraged to submit comments on the application to the local planning authority, Cornwall Council.
4. The total time allowed for public speaking will be 30 minutes with a maximum of three minutes per speaker.
5. Where there are more than ten speakers in total, if there is more than one speaker either for or against an application, the Clerk will ask them to appoint a spokesperson. If an agreement cannot be reached, only the first speaker to register will be allowed to speak.
6. Where there are more than ten speakers in total, Council may suspend Standing Order 1(e) to extend the time allowed for public speaking. Should the Council not wish to do so, only the first ten speakers registered will be permitted to speak.

Applicants and Agents

7. Applicants and agents who wish to present their proposal to the Town Council should arrange with the Town Clerk to do so at pre-application stage.
8. A maximum time of 20 minutes will be allowed for a presentation and may be followed by questions from Councillors for clarification. In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman may use his discretion to allow further time.
9. Presentations to the Planning Committee on pre-application proposals will be open to the public to observe, but will not be subject to public speaking.
10. If an application has been formally submitted for consideration, applicants and agents may register to speak at the Planning Committee by notifying the Clerk in writing (by letter or email) of their request by the close of business on the day of the meeting. For clarity, in the case of the majority of Planning Committee meetings which are held on a Tuesday, the deadline will be 5.00 p.m.

11. A maximum time of three minutes speaking time will be allowed for applicants and agents.

General

12. Public speaking on planning applications will be taken in the order of the agenda with the individual speakers in the following order:
 - (i) Applicant and/or agent
 - (ii) Speaker(s) in support
 - (iii) Speaker(s) against
13. After a speaker has spoken, Councillors will be permitted to ask questions for clarification only. There is no opportunity for debate at this point.
14. Comments made by the speakers will be briefly minuted.
15. Libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will be disregarded by the Council and will not be minuted.
16. Members of the public must not heckle or otherwise disrupt the meeting and must respect the rulings of the Chairman.
17. The Chairman has the right to exclude a disorderly person at any time or to adjourn the meeting to allow a serious disorder to be diffused.
18. The Chairman's decision is final and not open to debate.