

# Democratic Services Participation at Council Meetings A Guide for the Public

## Want to have your say?

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Public participation time is an opportunity for you to raise issues of concern or interest – you may ask a question, make a statement or present a petition
- As a member of the public you are able to speak at meetings – this includes the Full Council Meeting (other than the Annual Meeting) and the following Committees:-
  - Management
  - Policy Development
  - Scrutiny & Performance
  - Audit
  - Standards
  - Harbour Management
- There are separate procedures for speaking at certain regulatory committees such as Planning and Traffic and Licensing committees that are subject to published rules.
- You may be able to speak for three minutes during the public participation item provided you have given the relevant notice of two working days to Democratic Services.
- There is a 30 minute time period allocated for this purpose and all public participation is always at the discretion of the Chair

### WHAT CAN MY QUESTION REFER TO?

- Questions should relate to matters where the Council has powers or duties or which directly affect the Borough.
- A written or verbal question may be rejected if it:-
  - is not a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
  - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
  - has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months;
  - is of an individual or personal nature or relates to individual applications (whether planning or otherwise);
  - requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information

### HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

- You must contact the Democratic Services Office at the Council two working days prior to the meeting if you wish to speak at a committee meeting.
- You do not have to contact anyone if you only wish to attend and observe the meeting.

- If you are part of a deputation, one member of the group will normally be asked to speak on behalf of everyone. If there are a number of people wishing to speak on the same item, not necessarily part of a deputation, there may be a request for one or two speakers to represent overall views.
- You do not need to give notice if you wish to speak at the Full Council meeting, you can just turn up on the night.
- You may also give prior notice of a question in writing by post, fax or e-mail to the Democratic Services Manager no later than noon on the Friday before the Full Council meeting giving your name and address.

## **HOW LONG DO I HAVE?**

- Thirty minutes will be allowed for participation usually at the start of the meeting and you may speak for up to three minutes.
- At any meeting you can only ask 2 questions including any written question that you may have provided in advance of the meeting. Only two questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.
- At the meeting, the Chair may ask an appropriate Councillor or officer to reply directly to your question. Questions that cannot be answered at the meeting will receive a written reply within 10 days following the meeting.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING?**

- You will be asked to read your question aloud at the Council meeting.
- When you ask a question it will be dealt with by the most appropriate Councillor at the meeting.
- If you have given advance notice of your question you will still be asked to read aloud that question and a Councillor should be able to give you a full response. If this is not possible you will receive a written response following the meeting.
- Should you be unable to attend the Full Council meeting to ask your question, this will not be included in the business of the meeting and you will receive a response in writing.
- As a speaker you may be allowed to ask one supplementary question that must arise directly out of the original question or reply. This must take into account the length of your original question and answer and any other anticipated public participation.
- When you make a statement, present a petition or are part of a deputation, the Chairman may allow a brief response. Alternatively the issue you have raised may be referred to an appropriate meeting for debate and any Councillor may propose this.

### **Contact Details:**

The Democratic Services Team  
 Telephone 01305 838207  
 Fax 01305 838606

Please note that the name and contact details of the responsible Committee Officer is printed on the agenda for that committee.

[All our meeting information is available on our website \[www.weymouth.gov.uk\]\(http://www.weymouth.gov.uk\)](http://www.weymouth.gov.uk)