

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT GEORGEHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS:

To Note: all policy items below conform to the standards of protocol and behaviours set out in the Standing Orders. An up-to-date copy of Standing Orders is available on the Parish Council website.

Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings, but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chair authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, the Parish Council has set out a time for public participation at an agreed time when members of the public are invited to speak. This is generally at the start of the meeting.

Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council. The Council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda, **unless there is an urgent or overriding issue, at the discretion of the Chair.**

As a matter of best practice, the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors. If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for a future meeting at the discretion of the Council.

Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting as observers after the public session but will not be able to join in councillors' discussion. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may use discretion to suspend Standing Orders (suspend the discussion of the Council) to seek clarification from members of the public on a particular topic.

Members of the public may be excluded from the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues).

The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 3 minutes.

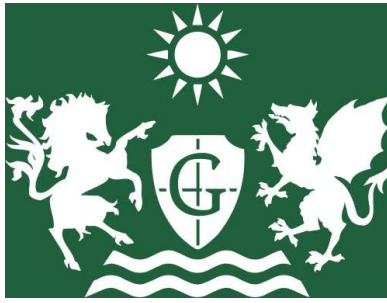
The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) shall not exceed 30 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting. Comments should be directed to the Chair of the meeting.

If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic then they should where possible, **at the discretion of the Chair**, nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of the public participation period.

Written statements must be received by the Clerk at least 3 days prior to the meeting. These will be circulated to councillors to read in advance of the meeting and will not usually be read out, but their content will inform the discussion of the council.

Public Forum is an opportunity for members of the public to:

- (a) make representations,
- (b) answer questions



(c) give evidence relating to the business to be transacted.

The Chair has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.

A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session should not require a response. Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.

A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. Individual representatives will not be named.

If the issue is on the agenda, then it will be discussed under the appropriate item and included in the minutes as usual. The Minutes of the meeting will record the decisions taken, and what actions will follow.

All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. Comments on planning matters should be material and relevant to matters of land use and planning policy.

All persons present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.

Please note: offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person.

Date of Review	Change Description
11.09.25	Initial creation of policy
21.03.26	Review