



Guidance for Members of the Public attending Council Meetings

1. Members of the public have the right to attend meetings of the Council and its committees and to observe proceedings, but they do not have a right to speak without invitation of the Council.
2. Pateley Bridge Town Council holds **two public sessions** at its meetings, called *Parishioners' Representations* where members of the public are invited to raise any issues of concern or ask questions.
3. *Parishioners' Representations* are part of the Agenda and will be controlled by the Chairman; they are reported briefly in the Minutes, but the identity of the speaker is only recorded if appropriate.
4. They take place at the beginning and at the end of the meeting and are limited to 10 minutes duration.
5. Members of the public are allowed to speak for up to three minutes.
6. Good manners and respect are expected during the public sessions and the decision of the Chairman upon proceedings is final.
7. Complaints to the Council are not permitted during council meetings, but must be addressed to the Clerk, via the Council's complaints procedure.
8. Detailed queries, including detailed financial issues, should be submitted in writing.
9. It is at the Chairman's discretion whether questions raised are answered at the meeting, or dealt with after the meeting by written response.
10. The Council cannot take a decision on any issue raised during the public session, unless the issue is already specified on the Agenda.
11. **Outside of the public sessions**, members of the public will only be permitted to speak if they have information for the Council which might have an impact on its decision-making in a specific issue; in this situation, the member of the public should indicate by hand to the Chairman who will come to them if there is an appropriate point in the proceedings, and at which point the Chairman will seek a formal resolution from the Council to permit this.
12. The Council does not have an obligation to deal with matters raised in the way the member of the public has requested; and there is no obligation to place a particular item on an Agenda for the Council or its committees to consider.
13. Where the Council considers a matter to be **confidential** (e.g. personal information, contracts or tenders, legal proceedings, the early stages of a dispute) it may resolve to exclude the public and the press whilst that item is considered.
14. The Council exists to represent the interests of the majority of its parishioners and makes responsible, legal and informed decisions on that basis.