

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

A GUIDE TO THE PROCEDURE

1. Public participation – what it means

The Council has agreed that, at the beginning of each meeting of the full Council a maximum of half an hour will be set aside to allow members of the public (by prior arrangement) to ask a question or make a statement.

A different procedure exists for the presentation of petitions at Council and major Committees.

2. Who can take part?

Any person who is resident or whose employment is located in Mid Suffolk is entitled to participate provided they make prior arrangements with the Monitoring Officer or his staff as described below. (There is no requirement for the speaker to be 18 years of age or over).

3. How it works

3.1 To help proceedings run smoothly, and in order to ensure that each speaker is given an equal opportunity to present their case, prior written notice must be given to the Monitoring Officer by no later than 5.00 p.m. two clear working days before the meeting. The written notice must clearly state:

- (a) the name(s) and address(es) of the person(s) wishing to speak;
- (b) the subject matter(s) they wish to raise;
- (c) if appropriate, the name of any organisation the speaker(s) represents;
- (d) a telephone number on which the speaker(s) can be contacted;

- N.B.** (i) The subject matter must be related, in broad terms, to Council business – all other matters will be ruled by the Monitoring Officer as inappropriate and the speaker(s) will not be scheduled to speak.
- (ii) No one will be allowed to participate if prior written notice is not received.

4. At the meeting

4.1 All speakers will be allocated a number. At the appropriate place in the meeting the Chairman will call out the number and name(s) of the speaker(s), the subject matter and invite the speaker(s) to proceed – for example:

"Speaker No 1: Mrs Ann Other or Friends of Blue Park who wishes to address the Council on the issue of the proposed sale of Blue Park, Needham Market".

- 4.2 The speaker should, if able, stand to make the presentation and must address the Chairman. Please see paragraph 8 if this is a problem.
- 4.3 Each question or statement will be restricted to a maximum of two minutes.
- 4.4 When the speaker has completed the question or statement (or at the end of the two minutes permitted – whichever is the sooner) and at the absolute discretion of the Chairman presiding at the meeting: -
- (a) The Chairman of the appropriate Committee will be invited to respond; or
 - (b) The Chairman of the appropriate Committee may invite an officer to respond on his behalf.
- 4.5 Each speaker will be allowed one supplementary question or statement provided this is directly related to the issue they have raised in their original question or statement.
- 4.6 Where in the opinion of the Chairman presiding at the meeting the subject raised needs research or verification of facts/detail – the Chairman will advise the speaker of this and give an assurance that a written response dealing with the issues raised will be sent within ten working days of the meeting.
- 4.7 The Chairman will conclude matters by summing up (as necessary) and calling on the next speaker.
- NB.** (a) A note of the issues raised will be made and will form a distinct part of the minutes of the meeting. The minutes will contain a list of the issues raised and identity of persons participating and the responses given;
- (b) The ruling of the Chairman presiding at the meeting on any matter relating to this procedure shall be final.
- 4.8 After the question(s) or issue(s) raised has been dealt with the speaker(s) may stay for the remainder of the meeting or leave the meeting as they wish. There will, however, be no other opportunity for further public participation during the remainder of the meeting.

5. Administrative Arrangements

- 5.1 A schedule of speakers will be prepared by the Monitoring Officer or his staff. The listing of the schedule will be arranged, on a first come, first-served basis. The same or similar issues will only be allowed if there is likely to be sufficient time to deal with them.

- 5.3 There is no requirement for a speaker to provide a copy of the full text of their statement or question although this would be helpful. Speaker(s) should however bear in mind that if an answer to a question is required at the meeting then it is only fair that as much prior notice as possible is given of the subject matter and that clear expression of the points to be raised is more likely to result in an appropriate answer. However, the details must be received no later than 5.00 p.m. two clear working days before the meeting.
- 5.4 The agenda for meetings of the Council is normally published one week before the day of the meeting and in any event not less than three clear working days before. The agenda and reports can be inspected after publication at the Council Offices, Needham Market or at most public libraries. Copies of the agenda and reports can be provided in advance of the meeting at a reasonable cost. A reasonable number of copies of the agenda will be available at the meeting at no charge.
- 5.5 If it is clear that there will be insufficient time for your question or statement to be dealt with, you will be informed by telephone. In that event your request will be referred automatically to the next meeting of the Council.

6. **How to participate**

- 6.1 Simply give written notice (as described at 3 above) to:

Monitoring Officer
Mid Suffolk District Council
High Street
Needham Market
Ipswich IP6 8DL

- 6.2 Details must be received no later than 5.00 p.m. two clear working days before the meeting.

7. **Need Help?**

- 7.1 If you would like some assistance in preparing your written notice or would like further details about this procedure, please contact a Governance Support Officer.

8. **Are You Disabled?**

- 8.1 If you are disabled in any way and consequently feel that standing or addressing the meeting may present a difficulty please let us know beforehand. As far as reasonably possible, special arrangements will be made to help you.

9. **Can we do Better?**

- 9.1 Your views on this procedure are welcome. If you feel the procedure could be improved in any way, please let us know by writing or telephoning a Governance Support Officer.