

**RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL**

**PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS**

This procedure is agreed under Standing Orders for Meetings No 62. There are two different types of participation for members of the public to speak at Meetings of Councillors as set out below:

**1. PRIOR TO MEETINGS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)**

- 1.1 Members of the public may speak on any matter which is not included on the Agenda but which is within the purposes of the Council, Committee or other Meeting, before a Meeting starts.
- 1.2 All Meetings may be preceded by a public participation period, not exceeding 10 minutes, for this purpose.
- 1.3 Formal decisions cannot legally be made on matters which are not on the published Agenda, but may be referred to a future Meeting for decision.

**2. DURING MEETINGS (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)**

- 2.2 Members of the public may speak on any matter included on the Agenda for a particular Meeting (but may not also speak on the matter in the public participation period prior to the Meeting).
- 2.3 Where the public are speaking on an Agenda item, the maximum time for public participation is 10 minutes, divided as follows:
  - 2.3.1 Supporters of the proposal or recommendation on the Agenda or in the report:- 5 minutes
  - 2.3.2 Objectors of the proposal or recommendation on the Agenda or in the report:- 5 minutes
  - 2.3.3 The Chairman may limit the number of speakers from either of these groups so that each person who is permitted to speak has an adequate opportunity to express their views. (As a guideline, three speakers from each group is normally the practical limit.)
- 2.4 All public remarks relating to an Agenda item shall be made immediately after the Chairman calls the item and before Members have started to debate it.

**3. GENERAL RULES & TIME LIMITS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- 3.1 Time will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Members of the public are therefore encouraged to give as much notice as possible of their wish to speak.
- 3.2 No member of the public may speak for more than 3 minutes.

- 3.3 A member of the public may not speak more than once on the same subject at the same Meeting, unless the Chairman of the Meeting invites him to clarify his remarks.
- 3.4 Members of the public may not speak on items that are confidential or exempt from publication under legislation.
- 3.5 Members of the public may not participate in the Councillors' debate.
- 3.6 The Chairman of the Meeting may rule that any public remarks are not appropriate and will not be accepted; for example if they are defamatory, frivolous or offensive. In such an instance the Chairman may disallow a person from speaking or continuing to speak.
- 3.7 At the discretion of the Chairman, and following consultation with the Town Clerk, the 10 minutes allowed for public participation may be extended.

#### **4. MEETINGS AT WHICH PUBLIC MAY SPEAK**

Members of the public may speak at any ordinary or programmed Meeting of Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties as detailed below and under the rules shown above.

##### **4.1 FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- 4.1.1. Members of the public may not speak at Meetings of the Full Council, on an item where a Committee has made a decision within its delegated powers (such items will be shown as the Committee 'resolving' to take a particular course of action); however
- 4.1.2 Members of the public may speak on an item in minutes of Committees that includes a 'recommendation' to Council; or
- 4.1.3 Members of the public may speak if the Council votes to suspend Standing Order 62 to enable them to do so.

##### **4.2 JOINT MEETINGS WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES**

In the interests of clarity, this procedure does not apply to those Meetings with other authorities or organisations to which the public are not normally admitted.

##### **4.3 COMMITTEE, SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORKING PARTIES**

Members of the public may speak at formally convened Meetings of a Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Party under the rules set out above.

##### **4.4 SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Members of the public may also speak at 'Special Meetings' of Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties, but only on items that are on the Agenda for the Meeting.

## **5. MEETINGS AT WHICH PUBLIC MAY NOT SPEAK**

Members of the public may not speak:-

- 5.5.1 At the Annual Meetings of the Council or Committees (held in May each year).
- 5.5.2 Where a Meeting is to debate an issue which, in the opinion of the Town Clerk is of extraordinary public interest and the Town Clerk is of the view that the rules in this procedure will not allow an adequate opportunity for public participation, the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the body which is to debate the issue, may agree special arrangements for public participation on the issue.
- 5.5.3 Where, following consultation with the Chairman of the body which is to debate the issue, the Town Clerk is of the opinion that public participation in any or all of the items on the Agenda for that Meeting would be inappropriate or unnecessary, having regard to other opportunities for the public to express their views to Councillors, he may decide that public participation will not be permitted for all or any of the items on the Agenda for that Meeting.

## **6. INTERPRETATION**

Wherever the word Chairman is used, it shall be deemed to include Vice-Chairman in the absence of the Chairman and Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor where they are acting as Chairman of a Meeting.

In the absence of the Town Clerk, any functions to be undertaken by that Officer shall be undertaken by the Deputy Town Clerk.

Adopted at Full Council 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010