

Public Participation Policy

Eynsham Parish Council wishes to encourage the public to attend its main meetings and committees. It also welcomes public participation in its deliberations (when considering planning applications, for example).

Availability of agendas, minutes of meetings, etc.

Agendas are posted on the Parish Council's notice boards. Agendas and Minutes are available from the Council's website at www.eynsham-pc.gov.uk. Copies of documents are available from the Parish Clerk in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Policy.

Public attendance at meetings

As a general rule, all Parish Council meetings (including committees) are open to the press and members of the public. However, from time to time, confidential items may be discussed in which case the press and members of the public are excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Written submissions

Members of public may

- submit comments on any agenda item in writing (including by e-mail).
- submit a written request for the Parish Council to consider any matter within its remit. Valid requests will be put on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting.

The Clerk will reply to any request informing of the date of the meeting when comments will be discussed as soon as practicable. The chair of a meeting may read out all or part of a written submission or summarise a submission or group of submissions making a similar point. Where allowed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, requests for confidentiality will be respected. Written submissions should be sent to the Parish Clerk.

Public speaking

The chair will take requests to speak from members of public on any agenda item during the 15 minute public participation agenda item, and will permit items unrelated to the agenda.

Members of public may indicate that they are willing to answer questions from Councillors on any agenda item about which they have particular knowledge. Persons speaking are required to give their name and address and state their interest in the matter under discussion.

Public participation will be limited to a maximum of five minutes per speaker addressed to the Chair, within a total time of 15 mins. The Chair may curtail any speech (for example, if inappropriate language is used).

Hybrid meetings

Eynsham Parish Council choose to hold hybrid meetings which promote ease of access to meetings and public participation. These are held 'in person' and online/remotely - the Parish Council has chosen to use M.Teams. The Clerk will host the meeting using the Parish Council-paid account and a code and link to the hybrid meeting will be detailed on the agenda and published on the website.

Online attendees will collect in the 'waiting room' prior to the meeting and will be admitted by the 'Host'. As the Host, the Clerk will have the ability to mute or remove anyone deemed a nuisance. All attendees will be set to 'mute' on entry to the meeting and if they wish to speak, they will be unmuted as directed by the Chairman.

As with 'in person' meetings in the Village Hall, members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak on agenda items during the public participation session, but will not be permitted to speak at other times, unless invited to do so by the Chairman.

To protect participants from malware, the 'chat', file sharing and screen sharing function will be disabled during the meeting. If necessary, the Clerk will display any documents required using the 'share screen' function.

Anyone wanting to speak should raise their hand using 'raise hand' in the options within Teams or by waving if they're using a camera so that the Chairman can see.

Where at all possible, all online attendees are to be seen out of courtesy to everyone.

Answers to questions may take the form of –

- A direct verbal response
- Reference to a publication
- A written answer after the meeting

Questions shall not be permitted that relate to the individual affairs of either the questioner or any other named person but should relate to matters of policy or practice – matters of general rather than personal concern.

Non-members of committees and sub-committees

Councillors who are not members of a committee may speak but not vote at such meetings in the same way as if they were a member of the public.

Co-option

The Parish Council may agree to co-opt interested members of the public to assist with Working Groups formed to deal with certain defined projects.

District and County Councillors

Agenda items will be included to allow reports to be given by District and County Councillors.