



## **Public Participation at Parish Council Meetings**

### **Introduction**

A Council Meeting is not a public meeting; it is a meeting held in public. A Public Forum is best practice and not a legal right. Lostock Gralam Parish Council is committed to community engagement and therefore welcomes the opportunity to offer a Public Forum at the start of each Ordinary Council Meeting.

Lostock Gralam Parish Council Ordinary Meetings shall be open to the public, press and police unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. A reason shall be given on the agenda for the public's exclusion.

### **Public Conduct**

Members of the public are asked to respect the fact that meetings are to conduct council business and interruptions during council business are not permitted. If, in the opinion of the Chairman, the business of the meeting is disrupted in any way, the Chairman will ask the person/s causing the disruption to be quiet, if they refuse then they will be asked to leave.

Mobile phones must be switched to silent during the meeting.

All persons' present will act respectfully towards others and must not act in any manner which demeans, insults, belittles, threatens, intimidates any other person.

All statements, questions, challenges, responses, or criticisms shall be made politely.

### **Public Forum**

Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

Public participation will be an agenda item during Ordinary Parish Council meetings. A maximum period of 15 minutes will be allocated for the item unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

No individual member of the public shall speak for more than 5 minutes.

Only one member of the public is to speak at one time.

If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chairman shall direct the order of speaking.

A public member question shall not require a response at the meeting by the Council members or the Clerk, nor start a debate on the question. However, at the discretion of the Chairman, the Council may give a response or decide to add the question asked to the next Agenda for debate.

If the subject spoken about by a member of the public is already an agenda item, it will be debated under the appropriate item.

Formal complaints should not be made during the public forum; they should be submitted in writing in accordance with Lostock Gramam Parish Councils Complaints procedure.

The Chairman has the right to say that a question or statement from the public is inappropriate and not acceptable.

#### **During Council Business (after Public Forum)**

During the Council meeting, a member of the public may raise their hand to request permission from the Chairman to speak, the Chairman may at their discretion, adjourn the meeting to allow the member of public to speak, if the Chairman feels that it will be of benefit to the debate.

Should a member of the public arrive after the public forum has closed, the Chairman will acknowledge the arrival of the member of public at the next agenda item. The Chairman will advise that the public forum has closed, and if time permits, they will be allowed to speak, if time does not permit, then the Chairman will advise that the member of public can submit their comments in writing.

The Chairman's decision is final on public participation