

PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Protocol for the public attending Town Council and Committee meetings.

If you are attending a town council or committee meeting and wish to address the meeting it may help you to be aware of the procedures.

Full council meetings begin at 7.45 pm unless otherwise advertised. A maximum period of **15 minutes** is set aside prior to the start of the formal meeting. This is to allow members of the public to address the meeting and you will be invited to speak during this period. Three minutes are allowed per person although the Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to extend this.

Members of the public are not entitled to become part of any of the meetings of the council. For a member of the public to speak, the meeting must be suspended and then reconvened after you have spoken. You may not question councillors or enter a debate with them.

If any member of the public wishes to ask a question or make a statement in respect of the business on the agenda these should be submitted in advance. You can do this either in writing to or by telephoning the town council office 2 working days before the meeting. This will allow the relevant information to be gathered.

Where you are not able to submit questions in respect of business on the agenda 2 days in advance, in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Chairman, you may be permitted to ask the question at the meeting. In this event a written or oral response will be provided at a later date.

You will be asked for your name and on what subject you wish to speak. Once an answer has been given you will be invited ask a supplementary question if required for clarification purposes. After this you are of course welcome to stay for the whole of the meeting but are free to leave at any time.

All questions must be asked via the chairman who will respond, if possible, or invite the relevant committee chairman to respond. A written response from PWTC will be sent if the answer is not available at the meeting.

At the start of the meeting the Chairman will generally welcome you and invite you to speak. Three minutes is quite a long time to talk but can go very quickly if the issue is complex so the following suggestions may help you to effectively get your comments across.

- ◆ Open your talk by explaining the location of any problem, try to be as specific as possible e.g. the piece of land at the junction of.... and
- ◆ Have a list of the relevant points you wish to make.
- ◆ Try to be concise and not go off the point.
- ◆ If you know what you want please ensure that you clearly inform the council.
- ◆ The town council may wish to send you information or keep you in touch with any developments, don't forget to supply your name and address to the Clerk.

Notes will be made of your comments and questions, but **do not** form part of the formal minutes. The minutes should only record decisions taken in the meeting. You should note however that this is a public meeting and a member of the press and other members of the public may be present. You should not slander anyone nor make any comments that are offensive or which you feel should not be public. If this is a sensitive issue please contact the Clerk to discuss the best way to proceed.

If you prefer not to address the council in public then contact the Clerk who can make alternative arrangements for your issue to be notified to members.

Speaking at a committee meeting will be at the discretion of the committee chairman.

Please remember that the people you are addressing are unpaid volunteers from your community. They have volunteered because they care about the community and wish to help the local residents. Town councillors are always pleased to have visitors to the meetings especially if there is an issue that the town council might be able to help with.