



Astley Village Parish Council

Protocol for Public Participation

This Protocol sets out the procedural rules governing public participation at Parish Council meetings.

Introduction

The Parish Council meets and makes its decisions in public and is committed to community engagement and therefore warmly invites members of the public, the press, the police and borough and county councillors to attend meetings and contribute within the public forum. A council meeting is not a public meeting; it is a meeting held in public and there is no requirement in law to provide an opportunity for the public to question Parish Councillors and for the Ward Borough and County Councillors to provide a report, but this Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to offer it.

This protocol has been developed based on best practice and recommendations from other Parish Councils and advice from the Local Government Association.

Protocol

1. Public participation will be for a maximum period of 30 minutes (unless extended at the Chair's discretion).
2. The conduct of the 'Public Engagement' item and admissibility of matters raised will be at the absolute discretion of the Chair.
3. Written questions received in advance of the meeting are encouraged but not essential; if provided in advance this will make it easier for an answer to be prepared. If questions are not provided in advance then members of the public should be aware that the Parish Councillors may be unable to answer those questions and defer that topic to a future date.
4. The Summons will indicate when the public participation will take place. This will be early on in the agenda so that councillors may take into account views expressed when reaching decisions. The Parish Council Meeting will be adjourned for a maximum of fifteen minutes to accommodate 'Public Participation'.
5. Public participation is permitted on any matters within the remit of the Parish Council. If members of the public are unsure whether a question is within the remit of the Parish Council, then the Parish Clerk will be able to answer this.
6. Questions shall not be permitted if the Chair deems that the question:
 - relates to quasi-judicial matters e.g. (current or potential legal proceedings, licensing applications, planning applications and appeals, Traffic Regulation Orders where public consultation has been authorised or undertaken);
 - relates to confidential or exempt matters or where the disclosure of this information would be required;
 - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
 - is directly about party political matters.
7. Questions and comments shall be put/made to the Chair. Questions/ comments may be responded to by the Chair or, at the Chair's discretion, by any other member or officer present.
8. If the question/comment relates to a topic on the agenda then the Chair may decide to respond when considering the item later in the meeting.
9. Members of the public should note that the Parish Council is only allowed to take decisions in relation to the items on the Summons unless it is deemed 'urgent'.
10. Members of the Parish Council will not be permitted to raise issues under the 'Public Engagement' item.