

## **OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

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

*In preparing this Protocol the Parish Council has referred to guidance published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)*

#### **Participation in the public forum**

A parish council meeting is not a public meeting, it is a meeting conducted in public, and there is no requirement in law to provide a public forum.

Ousden Parish Council welcomes community engagement and invites members of the public to attend meetings and contribute within the public forum. The public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct Council business and interruptions outside the public forum are not permitted.

From time to time confidential items may be discussed, in which case members of the public are excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act 1960).

#### **Information about the Public forum**

- The agenda is the official order of business for Parish Council meetings. By law, the Parish Council cannot take action on items or issues that are not listed in the agenda. The agenda will indicate when the public participation will take place.
- The Public forum will be for a period of 15 minutes. If a controversial item is on the agenda it may be extended at the Chairman's discretion, depending on the length of the agenda.
- The public forum is an opportunity for members of the public to (a) make representations, (b) answer questions or (c) give evidence relating to the agenda. Questions and comments should relate to items on the agenda.
- Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the Council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes. If you would like to raise a matter which is not on the agenda, it should be emailed to the clerk at least one week before the date of the next meeting.
- Neither councillors nor the clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made during the public forum. The Chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given as soon as possible after the meeting.
- Verbal questions/comments must be addressed to the Chairman and must not exceed 3 minutes in length.
- Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak the Chairman shall direct the order of speaking.
- A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting, however offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.
- The Parish Council asks that anyone who asks to speak during the public forum acts respectfully towards every other person present. All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature.

**Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting, the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person. Alternatively, if there is serious disorder the Chairman may decide to adjourn the meeting for a short time to allow order to be restored.**