



## GUIDANCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT ASTON ROWANT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Adopted: April 9th 2025

### Introduction

Aston Rowant Parish Council is committed to community engagement and therefore warmly invites members of public to contribute during the public forum item at meetings.

Residents/members of the public have a statutory right to attend Full Council and Committee meetings of the council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chair authorises them to do so. However, to encourage community engagement, Aston Rowant Parish Council has set 15 minutes for a public forum close to the beginning of each Full Council and Committee meeting when residents/members of the public are invited to speak.

During the public forum, a topic on or not on the agenda can be spoken about. As a matter of best practice, the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors. If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for future meetings at the discretion of the Clerk/Council. Residents/members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting after the public forum as observers but will not be able to join in the discussion unless invited to do so by the Chair.

Residents/members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in a closed session (e.g., staffing matters, tenders for contracts, and some legal issues).

## Rules

1. The time designated for public forum in at a meeting in accordance with the standing orders shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.
2. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
3. If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic, then they are encouraged to nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of public participation period.
4. The Chair has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.
5. In accordance with the standing orders, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given, or placed on the agenda for future meeting discussion.
6. A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and is invited to stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort) but this is not essential if they do not feel comfortable doing so.
7. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chair.
8. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
9. Residents/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.
10. Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made in the public forum. Residents/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.
11. A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session shall not require a response and there should be no debate or discussion between the Council and the public.
12. A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. No libellous, offensive, or discriminatory comments will be recorded.
13. All persons present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.
14. All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. There should be no reference to personal views on any person.
15. 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.