

Introduction to Public Participation Time read by the Mayor, Councillor Steve Poultney, prior to the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 4th May 2016

I'm going to start tonight's public participation time with a short statement summarising how things will work this evening. It is important to remember that our only reason for meeting tonight is to work through the business on the agenda. The purpose of public participation time is therefore to provide a space for local residents to make representations, ask questions or provide evidence that will inform councillors' discussion at tonight's meeting.

The Council makes reasonable provision for this by setting aside a total of 15 minutes, and asks that no individual speaks for more than 3 minutes. I have given generous leeway to that in the past, but I do intend to enforce these restrictions tonight. If a speaker looks likely to run up to the three minute limit the clerk will raise his hand to indicate when there is only 15 seconds remaining to give you fair warning that the end is near.

Public Participation Time is not, and has never been, the principal means of communication between residents and their councillors. Currently the easiest way of making contact is by e-mail which can be copied to all councillors and council officers at the click of a button. Councillor 'phone numbers and postal addresses are also widely available. The same is true of the Council offices, and the Council also operates a public help desk next door to this building where anybody can pop in and raise any issue of concern they want, Monday to Friday. Speaking in public participation time is therefore an added extra to this list, rather than an alternative.

All of that said, this Council has no wish to restrict anyone from raising an issue that they wish to draw to the Council's attention. Therefore slips of paper have been placed on the chairs for you to jot down any issue that you would like us to consider, together with your contact details if you so wish. This, and other aspects of public participation time, will be given further consideration by the Council's newly formed Communications Working Party.

I have discussed this approach with fellow councillors, and the Town Clerk, and I believe it to be a fair and balanced approach. I will say now, respectfully, to everyone gathered here this evening, that if speakers stray away from these guidelines, and attempt to make a statement on a subject that is not on tonight's agenda, then I am likely to interrupt, politely ask you to stop and to invite you to put your comments in writing.

If you would like to speak please raise your hand, and if called give your name and the number of the agenda item that you want to address. Please step forward to the microphone to speak. Thank you.