

Public Participation Guidelines

Town Council meetings are not public meetings, but members of the public have a statutory right to attend as observers. Members of the public do not have a legal right to speak unless authorised by the Chair, however, the Town Council allocates a time during each meeting for public participation where members of the public are invited to speak on the business on the agenda.

So that we can conduct meetings efficiently and transparently, allowing for meaningful public participation while adhering to legal standards, we have prepared some guidelines for public participation. Please give them a read before attending one of our meetings.

Procedures for Raising Issues and Public Speaking:

Members of the public can speak during the allocated public participation session.

Public participation allows representations, questions, or evidence related to the agenda. Items not on the agenda cannot be raised or discussed**.

Members of the public must register to speak by contacting the Clerk 48 hours before the meeting.

Each speaker is usually limited to 3 minutes dependant on the number of requests received.

If multiple individuals wish to speak on the same topic, they will be asked to nominate one spokesperson to avoid duplication.

Observing Meetings:

Members of the public are welcome to stay and observe the council meeting after the public participation session. They may only join the discussion if invited by the Chair.

Meeting Conduct:

A maximum time for the public participation session is set by the Council.

All participants must act respectfully and avoid demeaning, insulting, threatening, or intimidating behaviour.

Statements, questions, and responses must be polite, fact-based, and free from personal references.

Disruptive, offensive, or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. The Council reserves the right to curtail contributions, exclude disorderly individuals, or suspend the meeting until order is restored, while order is restored Councillors will vacate the room.

Response to Public Questions:

Councillors and Officers are not obliged to respond immediately to questions or comments.

Public participation does not force items onto the council agenda nor dictate how matters are recorded in the minutes.

Questions raised during the public session do not require a response and should not lead to debate between the Council and the public.

Recording of Participation:

A brief record of topics raised will be included in the meeting minutes, excluding any libellous, offensive, or discriminatory comments.

Confidentiality:

The public may be excluded from parts of the meeting discussing confidential items, such as staffing matters, contract tenders, or legal issues, by a resolution of the meeting.

** To ensure our meetings are fair, transparent, and legally compliant, the Town Council follows a set agenda. We are unable to address items that are not the agenda because by law, the agenda must be sent out at least three clear days before the meeting so that everyone has time to review and consider the topics to be discussed so that they can arrive at informed decisions in the meeting. According to the law, we can only make decisions on items listed on the agenda. If something isn't on the agenda, we have no legal authority to act on it.

If you would like to speak at a council or committee meeting you must contact the Clerk of the meeting at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

For Full Council, Resources Committee and Climate Emergency Committee please contact:
townclerk@todmorden-tc.gov.uk

For Development Committee please contact: assistanttownclerk@todmorden-tc.gov.uk