

# Public Participation at Committee Meetings

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## **Introduction**

### **Part 1 – Attending Meetings**

Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and most Committees are open to the public who may attend and observe.

The majority of meetings can be viewed. The Council, Cabinet and Committees are livestreamed and the livestream link can be found on the agenda page for the meeting and will also be available as a recording on the website. At the current time, it is not feasible to livestream Highways and Traffic Orders Committees.

Members of the public may use social media to report on proceedings at meetings. Anyone who wishes to film any part of the proceedings may do so, unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer so that those present are aware.

Members of the public will be treated with respect and courtesy when attending meetings of the County Council. They will be listened to and everyone who has registered will be able to speak without interruption or intimidation (within the overall timescales). For further information please see the Council's [public behaviour protocol](#).

It is also expected that members of the public listen to the proceedings and respect the views and experiences of other people contributing.

### **Part 2 - Public Participation, Questions, Representations and Petitions**

Members of the public are able to ask a question of the Leader or Cabinet Members at meetings of the full Council or at meetings of the Council's Cabinet. Attendance can be in person or in some circumstances via Teams (check with the Democratic Services team).

Representations may be made to the Council, Development Management Committee, Scrutiny Committees, the Highways and Traffic Orders Committees or the Public Rights of Way Committee. The representation and the name of the person making the representation will be recorded in the minutes.

At meetings of the Council, it must either be a representation or a question, not both.

To ask a question or make a representation, the individual must live in the area served by the County Council.

The public may also, at any time, deliver or present a petition to the Council or one of its Committees (depending on the subject matter). There are various actions which the Council may take (depending upon the numbers of signatures the petition has) and for further

information, please read the Council's Petition Scheme (part 4g).

Any question can be asked provided it is not frivolous, defamatory nor concerns a confidential issue which would be considered in private. The question can be about any matter which relates to the responsibilities of the Council or Cabinet. If you are not sure about which meeting is responsible, please contact the Democratic Services Officer who will be happy to advise.

To engage with one of our meetings, the Democratic Services team will be pleased to help and signpost accordingly to which meeting might be best to attend.

### **Part 3 – Submitting Questions to Council or Cabinet**

To submit a formal, written question it must be put in writing (by email) before 12 noon on the fourth working day before the date of the meeting (i.e. if the meeting is on a Friday then the question must be submitted by the preceding Monday, taking into account any Bank Holidays). The contact details for Democratic Services Officer will be shown on the agenda page for the meeting. Where the question relates to a report on an agenda and that Report is not available by this time, it may still be possible to ask a question. Provided written notice of a question is received within 24 hours of that Agenda or Report having been published, then the question shall be allowed.

All questions submitted to Council and Cabinet will be printed in the order received and will be circulated to everyone at the meeting with a written response. It is not expected that the initial question is read out, but questioners will be invited to ask one supplementary question arising from the answer received. This **must** be a question, not a statement.

When submitting a question, it would be helpful if a telephone number can be provided so we can make contact if there is anything to clarify.

Only one question at any meeting of the Council or the Cabinet may be asked. If more than one question is received or a single question contains several questions, then only the first question will be accepted.

It is best to keep questions succinct to avoid any misunderstanding. 50 words is normally sufficient to frame a clear and direct question.

### **Part 4 - Attendance and time allowed for petitions and/or questions**

At Cabinet, there is a maximum of 30 minutes in total. If there are a lot of questions and not all the questions can be dealt with in that timescale, then a response will be sent by email.

At a full Council meeting, this 30-minute time allocation will also include any oral representations being made by members of the public or any petitions being handed in.

If the meeting cannot be attended, the answer to question will be emailed to the questioner and will be available on the Council's website.

In terms of Petitions, members of the public can attend the meeting to submit a Petition. It may be possible in some instances to attend remotely and submit the Petition in advance to the Democratic Services Officer. Please check with the Democratic Services Officer in advance of the meeting.

### **Part 5 - Answers to Questions and What Happens Next**

The answer to a formal question will be put in writing, will be circulated at the meeting and published on the website.

The chair of the meeting will highlight that a written response has been prepared in response to the question and will invite questioners to ask a supplementary question based on the answer given. This is not an opportunity to make statements, but a succinct follow-on question on the same matter.

### **Part 6 - Representations to Council**

Any member of the public who lives in the area served by the County Council may make oral representations on any matter relating to the functions of the Council. Such representations will be limited to 3 minutes, within the overall time allowed of 30 minutes (this 30-minute time allocation will also include any questions from members of the public). Whilst views and comments may be acknowledged by the Chair of the meeting, there will not be detailed 'answers' to any points included in a representation. Officers may choose to respond to something raised, but this is a matter for them, and it is not to be expected to receive a response to a representation.

If a member of the public wishes to make such a representation, they must, via email, submit an outline of the points they wish to raise before 12 noon 4 working days before the meeting takes place.

### **Part 7 - Representations to the Scrutiny Committee Meeting**

At Scrutiny Committee meetings, a member of the public who is resident in the area served by the County Council may make oral representations on any substantive matter listed on the agenda. This must relate to a specific matter or examination of services provided or to be provided, therefore excludes items such as minutes and work programming items.

Representations will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes per person, within an overall

time limit of 15 minutes at the start of the meeting.

If a member of the public wishes to make a representation, they should, via email, submit details of the points they wish to raise, before 12 noon 4 working days before the meeting. There will not be detailed answers to any points that are raised at the meeting, although Officers or Members may choose to respond if they wish to do so. This is not a debate, but an opportunity for clarification if needed. Members may take into consideration the points that are raised in their questioning of the subject at the appropriate point in the meeting.

If more than one person wishes to make the same point or make similar representations, those persons may be asked to agree a spokesperson to make a single presentation.

It is important to recognise that Scrutiny Committees are not decision-making bodies but can make recommendations to the Cabinet (a decision-making body), therefore consider which forum or mechanism might be best to engage with the Council's meetings.

## **Part 8 - Representations to Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees**

Representations may also be made to Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees in relation to certain types of application, Traffic or Footpath Orders respectively, to be considered by those Committees at the meeting at which the Order is being considered. The rules governing these representations are set below:-

- the representations will be strictly limited to 3 minutes and will be timed by the Democratic Services Officer;
- participants will be invited to make their representation and will be advised by the Democratic Services Officer where they should sit; or when to speak if attending online;
- representations will be made following a short introduction from the appropriate officer of the County Council;
- there is no right to ask questions of Officers or Members;
- there is no right to participate in the debate;
- representations will normally be on the basis of 1) Applicant 2) Objector and 3) Supporter as appropriate but detailed operation of the procedure will be entirely at the discretion of the Chair;
- There may be representations from applicants, objectors and supporters, if one decides not to participate, others will not be precluded from making a representation;
- where a planning application (or ROMP application) Traffic Order or Public Footpath Order arouses a large number of objections or support, those concerned may be asked to nominate a representative to present their views. In such cases the identity of the spokesperson must also be made known to the Democratic Services Officer prior to the

start of the meeting;

- In relation to the Development Management Committee participants will only be able to make one representation on a particular application. On the rare occasion that an application comes to the Committee again with changes from the original proposals, participants may speak but limit the scope of their comments to those changes. Participants may not speak when the Committee is only considering the report of a site visit.
- if applicants, objectors or supporters wish to make a representation to any of these Committees they must give notification to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team by 12 noon on the fourth working day before the relevant meeting. It will be up to the applicant, objector or supporter to register their wish to make a representation. The County Council will not invite participation or send reminders.

### **Part 9 - Agenda Publication for a meeting?**

Agendas are normally published one week in advance of the meeting and are available at the Council's offices at County Hall and on the Committee Pages -

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

### **Part 10 – Democratic Services Contact Details**

Please click on the relevant Committee from this link [Committee structure - Democracy in Devon](#) and the Clerks contact details will be displayed at the bottom of the page – alternatively email [committee@devon.gov.uk](mailto:committee@devon.gov.uk)