

# Receiving Public Questions, Representations and Evidence at Meetings

RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE: P&F

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*This is a policy/procedure document of Saltash  
Town Council to be followed by both  
Councillors and Employees.*

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05.2023	2023	AJT	ATM 04.05.2023	65/23/24c(xiii)	Readopted

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03.2024	2024	SB	FTC 07.03.2024	367/23/24c	Recommendation from P&F. Approved.

<b>Document Retention Period</b>
Until superseded

## **Receiving public questions, representations and evidence at meetings**

Members of the public have a legal right to attend decision making meetings of the Town Council and its Committees, except where they are excluded for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters or tenders for contracts). A period of fifteen minutes will be designated for public participation at a meeting and this session is recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

### **Submission of Questions, Representations and Evidence**

Questions, **representations and evidence** must be submitted in writing **no later than 12 noon the day before the meeting** either by email to [enquiries@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saltash.gov.uk) or sent to The Guildhall, 12 Lower Fore Street, Saltash PL12 6JX. Please provide your full name and address and indicate if you will be present at the meeting.

No person may submit more than one question to a meeting and no more than one question may be asked on behalf of an organisation.

Any questions submitted after the deadline will be referred to the next meeting.

Anonymous questions will not be answered.

### **Order of Questions**

Questions will be taken in the order in which notice was received but the Chairman of the meeting may group together similar questions. Where the enquirer is unable to be present their question will be read out by the Town Clerk.

All questions shall be put to the Chairman and no member of the public may speak for longer than three minutes. You can only ask your question as submitted; you cannot change the question or give further information. Supplementary questions, may be allowed at the discretion of the Chairman but must relate to your original question or the reply. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman shall direct in which order this will be.

A public question shall not start a debate at the meeting.

## **Scope of Questions**

Questions must relate to a matter to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the town of Saltash.

Questions will not be allowed on matters which have previously been determined.

The Town Clerk as the Proper Officer will reject a question if:

- It is beyond the legal powers of the Town Council.
  - The Town Clerk will inform the Chairman of the Town Council or relevant Committee of the reasons(s) why.
  - The Town Clerk will inform the person that submitted a public question of the reason(s) for rejection.

The Chairman of the meeting will reject a question if it:

- Is not about a matter for which the Town Council has a responsibility or which affects the town of Saltash.
- Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive.
- Requires the disclosure of confidential information.
- Is the same, or substantially the same question as one asked in the previous six months.

## **Response to Questions**

Questions may be answered by the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Town Councillors or the Town Clerk and will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

- A verbal response may be made at the meeting.
- The Town Clerk will be asked to respond in writing.
- The Town Council may decide to place the item on an agenda for a future meeting (or refer it to a Committee) for further consideration.
- Where the enquirer was not present at the meeting a copy of the response will be provided if made at the meeting.

## **Procedure in respect of planning applications**

Members of the public wishing to speak about a planning application should register by email **no later than 12 noon the day before the meeting** where the application will be considered.

The Chairman will introduce the application and invite speakers in the following order:

- The applicant or their agent
- Objector
- Supporter
- Ward Members

Following this, Members of the Committee may debate and will then vote on the application.

Where more than one objector/supporter has registered to speak, the first received will be permitted to speak. Where there are number of interested parties in an application, they are advised to coordinate their response and nominate a speaker.

### **Time Limits**

Each public speaker has a time limit of three minutes to make their representation. At the discretion of the Chairman and with the approval of Members, a further two minutes may be permitted where new information is available.

### **Protocol**

Members of the public should not interrupt other speakers or the Committee debate. Where Members of the Committee ask questions of a public speaker this does not entitle them to participate in the debate.

All speakers must respect the Chairman and respond to instructions accordingly.

Speakers should restrict their comments to material planning considerations only

**Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Town Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person or clear the public gallery.**

### **What to expect on the night**

A handout available on the public gallery chairs to include the below information, that explains the process on the night:

‘Welcome to Saltash Town Council and thank you for submitting a public question, the following is guidance when asked to speak in the meeting.

All questions shall be put to the Chairman and no member of the public may speak for longer than three minutes.

Please only ask your question when directed by the Chairman. You can only ask your question as submitted; you cannot change the question or give further information.

Supplementary questions may be allowed at the discretion of the Chairman but must relate to your original question or the reply.

Any evidence or representation submitted along with the question will have been published in the report pack and as such, you can assume members will have read it.

Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman shall direct in which order this will be.

We appreciate your co-operation’.