



Haslemere Town Council **Guidelines for public speaking at Council Meetings.** **(Adopted 2023)**

Haslemere Town Council welcomes participation at all its public meetings from residents and other external bodies where appropriate. Meetings are open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for any other special reasons.

There is limited space in the Council chamber. In addition to Town Councillors, staff and press up to around 20 members of the public can be comfortably accommodated (at the discretion of the Clerk). It is imperative that the Town Clerk is notified as far in advance as possible if a large number of residents wish to attend. This gives Council time, if necessary, to find an alternative location and prevents the meeting having to be abandoned if the Clerk judges there is a Health and Safety issue.

Full Council and Committee meetings.

Questions from the Public

Questions from residents do not have to be notified to the Council in advance but it is helpful so that Council can do any necessary preparation before hand. Residents are encouraged to contact the Town Clerk or Committee Clerk as soon as possible before the meeting to discuss.

After Apologies for Absence, the person presiding may for a period of up to fifteen minutes in total, permit members of the public present at the meeting, and either resident in the Town or with a business in the Town to do one of the following:

- i. Make a statement; or
- ii. Ask a question relating only to the business of the Council or relevant Committee; or
- iii. Present a petition of at least ten signatures;
provided that:
 - i. The person presiding at the meeting may, at their discretion, defer the presentation, question or petition until the appropriate point in the agenda;
 - ii. No more than one member of the public shall be permitted to speak for or against any one subject;
 - iii. The member of the public shall identify him/herself before speaking at the meeting;
 - iv. All matters shall be addressed to the Chairman and the time allowed for making a statement or asking a question shall not exceed **four minutes**, unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting;
 - v. The person presiding may allow Councillors to ask questions of the member of the public to clarify what is being said.
 - vi. All responses to statements, questions or petitions shall be given by the person presiding at the meeting without debate, save that the person presiding may direct that a response be referred to an employee for a written or oral response.

Representation by External Bodies (Full Council only)

After questions by the public, external bodies may, by prior agreement with the Town Clerk, make a presentation to Council. The Town Clerk needs to be notified of a body's intention to speak at least 7 working days before the meeting. This is to prevent several bodies turning up at the same meeting and then not being permitted to speak due to time restraints.

Presentation by external bodies are normally limited to 15 minutes but this may be varied at the discretion of the Chairman.