

Lawford Parish Council



RULES OF PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Parish Council believes in open government and involving the general public wherever possible.

To this end the Council has adopted a policy of having periods at both Council and Committee meetings when members of the public can speak.

In order for this to work effectively it is necessary to have a protocol which is set down in the Council's Standing Orders document ref: 3 (a-t) and reproduced below.

Protocol

- Meetings shall be open to the public unless public presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.
- Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.
- The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- In accordance with standing order 3(e) a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and may be requested to stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort).
- A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- Only one person is permitted to speak at a time – including Councillors. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.

The following conditions also apply:

- (a) No elector will be allowed to speak more than once, unless invited by the Chairman.
- (b) Unless authorised by the Chairman Members of the public will not be able to speak on any planning applications outside this Parish and understand that we can only pass comment and the Principal Authority is Tendring District Council who determines the outcome of applications.

(c) Any member of the Public attending the Public Forum may submit a written question if they wish.

General

The Chairman is in overall control of the meeting and he or she will decide who may speak and in which order. When it is your turn to speak the chairman will ask you to identify yourself and to address the meeting.

The Chairman also has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.

In order to be fair to all, when planning applications are being discussed neither the applicant nor other interested persons are allowed to take part in the debate or discuss the application in the public participation period.

Whilst the members of the Council will endeavour to respond to the questions that are raised they may decide not to discuss the issue at that time but to defer discussion to a later date or refer the matter to a committee for consideration.

The Chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given

If you wish to take part in 'Public Voice' please be aware that you will be speaking in public and that meetings may be recorded and press may be present, therefore you should not say anything you would not wish to be reported.

Public Voice forms part of the Council meeting in law and shall be minuted.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information please contact the Clerk to the Council.

RECORDING AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making (Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014). It supports the video or audio recording by the public and press of meetings that are open to the public, for either live or subsequent broadcast.
2. This guidance note sets out some general information intended to help members of the public who may be intending to report on meetings, either by recording them for simultaneous or later broadcast, or via social media. Anyone wishing to take advantage of these facilities is encouraged to telephone or email the Clerk to the Council (whose name and contact details will appear on the agenda) before the meeting, so that arrangements can be discussed in advance.

FILMING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

The Amended 1960 Act provides that a person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he/she is present at the meeting of a parish council or its committees but otherwise may:

- Film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting;
- Use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear Proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later;
- Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.

The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their Report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

1. The right to film, record etc. is limited to the duration of the meeting. Recording must not start until the meeting is called to order, and must cease when the Chairman closes the meeting.
2. Filming or recording equipment cannot be left in the meeting room at times when the public is excluded (for example because confidential or exempt information is being discussed).
3. Intrusive filming of a specific individual or individuals will not be permitted.
4. Some members of the public attending the meeting may object to being filmed, photographed or recorded. The Council will ask those filming, photographing or recording the meeting to respect their wishes, and will expect that these are complied with.
5. The Council expects that film or audio recordings will not be edited before transmission in a way that misrepresents what occurred.
6. Filming or recording is not permitted if the effect would be to interrupt or disturb the proceedings. This means that, for example:
 - a. Oral commentary is not permitted.
 - b. Equipment which needs setting up must be in place when the meeting starts.
 - c. Excessive noise, intrusive lighting, and the use of flash photography are not permitted.
 - d. Speakers must not be asked to repeat statements for the purpose of recording.
 - e. "Roaming" while filming or recording is not permitted – those operating equipment must stay in the area designated to them. This list is not exhaustive. If, in the Chairman's opinion, a person filming or recording a meeting or taking photographs is interrupting proceedings or causing a disturbance, under the Council's Standing Orders the person can be ordered to stop their activity, or to leave the meeting.

REPORTING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

10. Blogging, Tweeting, or other commentary on meetings through social media must not interrupt or disturb the meeting. The same rules apply as set out above.