

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Public Participation Policy

This policy was adopted by Hunton Parish Council at the meeting held on 18th March 2024.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hunton Parish Council wishes to encourage the public to attend its main meetings and committee meetings. Where appropriate, it also welcomes public participation in its deliberations (when considering planning applications, for example).

2. Availability of agendas and minutes of meetings

- 2.1 Agendas are posted on the Parish Council's noticeboards.
- 2.2 Agendas and minutes of meetings are available on the Parish website at www.huntonparishcouncil.org.uk.
- 2.3 Copies of documents are available from the Parish Clerk in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Policy (see below for contact details).

3. Public attendance at meetings

- 3.1 As a general rule, all Parish Council meetings (including committees and sub-committees) are open to the press and members of the public.
- 3.2 However, from time to time, confidential items may be discussed in which case the press and members of the public are excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

4. Written submissions

- 4.1 Members of the public may submit comments on any agenda item in writing (including by email).
- 4.2 Members of the public may also submit a written request for the Parish Council to consider any matter within its remit. Valid requests will be put on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting.
- 4.3 The Clerk will reply to the request as soon as practicable, informing the member of the public of the date of meeting when the comments will be discussed.
- 4.4 The Chairman of a meeting may read out all or part of a written submission or summarise a submission or group of submissions making a similar point.
- 4.5 Where allowed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, requests for confidentiality will be respected.

4.6 Written submissions should be sent to the Parish Clerk (see below for contact details).

5. Public speaking

5.1 Although there is no automatic right for members of the public to speak at Council meetings, the Chairman will consider requests to speak on any agenda item but is not obliged to grant all or any of them.

5.2 Members of the public may also indicate that they are willing to answer questions from councillors on any agenda item about which they have particular knowledge.

5.3 Requests to speak should preferably be notified to the Parish Clerk verbally or in writing before the start of the meeting, indicating which agenda item their request relates to.

5.4 Any final requests to speak must be raised under the agenda item 'Parishioners Open Session' near the start of business. Later requests will not be considered.

5.5 Where more than one person makes a request to speak, the Chairman may ask those wishing to make a similar point to appoint a spokesman.

5.6 The number of people invited to speak on any agenda item will be limited to a maximum of three.

5.7 In most cases, priority will be given to requests to speak in the order that they are notified to the Parish Clerk, but this may be varied by the Chairman of the meeting where it is necessary to ensure that differing views are aired.

5.8 Persons invited to speak should be asked to give their name and state their interest in the matter under discussion.

5.9 Anyone wishing to address a meeting of Hunton Parish Council must be a resident of Hunton, or if not a resident, seek permission to speak prior to the commencement of the relevant meeting.

5.10 At the Chairman's discretion speeches may be limited to a maximum of three minutes each.

5.11 The Chairman of the meeting may curtail any speech (for example, if inappropriate language is used).

6. Non-member of committees and sub-committees

6.1 Councillors who are not members of a committee or sub-committee may speak but not vote at such meetings.

7. Co-option

7.1 The Parish Council may agree to co-opt interested members of the public to assist with Action Groups formed to deal with certain defined projects.

8. Contact details for the Parish Clerk

8.1 General enquiries or verbal requests to speak at a meeting may be made to the Parish Clerk on 01622 681238.

8.2 Written submissions should be sent to:

Hunton Parish Council
11 Barton Road
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 7BU

Or by email to: huntonpc@googlemail.com.