

YOUR RIGHT TO SPEAK AT MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET AND COMMITTEES OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Members of the public have the right to speak at many of the meetings of the Borough Council on issues listed on the agenda for the particular meeting. Time is also set aside at the beginning of most meetings for the public to ask questions.

This leaflet explains the rights of the public to speak at meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other committees of the Borough Council.

Separate leaflets explains the procedure for speaking at meetings of the Planning and Licensing Committees.

Copies of this and other information leaflets can be obtained from the reception points at the Town Hall and 1 Grove Road, or by contacting Local Democracy at the address shown at the back of this leaflet.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION OR HAVE ANY QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Local Democracy

Town Hall, Grove Road,
Eastbourne, BN21 4UG

Tel: (01323) 415021 or 415023 or 415022 or 415031

Minicom: (01323) 415111

Fax: (01323) 410322

E-Mail: localdemocracy@eastbourne.gov.uk

Council Website: www.eastbourne.gov.uk

YOUR RIGHT TO SPEAK

DETAILS OF MEETINGS

Meetings are normally held at the Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne starting at 6pm. Details of meeting dates and times are publicised outside the Town Hall and at the Central Library, or can be obtained from Local Democracy.

PUBLIC RIGHT OF ADDRESS

The public have a right to speak at meetings on items which appear on the published agenda (this is different from Public Question Time which is explained later in this leaflet).

Agendas are published about a week before the meeting and may be inspected at the Town Hall or on the Council's web-site. Public copies of the agenda are available at the meeting. Please contact Local Democracy if you require information before the meeting or a copy of the agenda.

How To Register Your Interest

You must contact Local Democracy (by telephone, letter, fax or e-mail) by 12 noon two working days before the meeting (e.g. 12 noon on the Tuesday prior to a meeting to be held on a Thursday).

Some Important Rules

Your request to speak must be in connection with an item on the agenda for the meeting. Normally only one speaker will be allowed to address the meeting on an item. One person should act as spokesperson for a group with a common interest.

If a third party (i.e. another person or organisation) is involved, you will only be allowed to speak if that person or organisation has been notified in advance and given the opportunity to respond.

Guidance On Speaking

A time limit of 3 minutes applies to each speaker, though this may be extended if the meeting agrees.

Begin by giving your name and address and whether you are speaking as an individual or as a representative of group.

It is useful to prepare notes in advance to ensure that all the important points are covered. Try to be brief and to the point.

Avoid derogatory or defamatory statements. There is no legal protection for comment made at meetings.

Bring an extra copy of any prepared statement for the Chairman's information.

Meeting Procedure

You should arrive at the Town Hall at least 10 minutes before the start of the meeting. Make yourself known to the Committee Administrator. This allows time for an explanation of the procedures. It is usual for items for which members of the public are attending to be taken early in the proceedings.

Consideration of the item on the agenda will normally run through the following stages:-

- First, the Chairman will invite you to come forward and take a seat at the meeting table. You will then be asked to speak.
- Second, the report on the matter will be presented (a Council official will normally have submitted a written report with the agenda and he or she will be called upon to speak upon the report).
- Next, members will debate the item.

[Please note that a speaker can only be heard once, unless it is in response to a question from a member.]

- Following the debate, a decision will be made.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

At certain meetings members of the public have a right to ask questions on a matter concerned with the powers and duties of the Council.

This right applies to meetings of the Cabinet, committees and most other formal bodies of the Council, but excludes meetings of the full Council and the Planning Committee.

Some questions are not allowed - see below.

Who Can Ask A Question?

Any member of the public may ask a question.

You will normally be expected to attend the meeting in order to put your question. If you are unable to attend the Chairman may, at his or her discretion, put the question on your behalf.

No questioner may submit more than one question for answer at the same meeting and no more than one question may be asked on behalf of an organisation.

How To Register Your Question

Your question must be made in writing and sent to the Town Hall not later than 12 noon two days prior to the meeting (e.g. if the meeting is on a Thursday the question must be received by 12 noon the preceding Tuesday). You must give your full name and address. (If you wish, you can obtain a printed application form on which you can write down your question).

Please keep a copy of the question, as you will have to read it out at the meeting.

Questions Not Allowed

You may not ask a question in furtherance of your own particular circumstances nor about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, tribunal or to a Government minister. You may not ask a question about the service conditions of any person employed by the Council.

A question that is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious or offensive will not be allowed. Nor will a question that is substantially the same as one asked within the past 6 months or which requires the disclosure of confidential information.

At The Meeting

The Chairman of the meeting will select the questions to be put. The answer may be given verbally or in writing. The person asking the question may ask one supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. Any question properly submitted but not dealt with at the meeting will be answered in writing.