

WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Public Participation Policy

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Introduction

All members of the public and press are welcome to attend meetings of Waldridge Parish Council, and have a legal right to do so under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. However, the Council recognises that rules must control the manner of participation in order that the Council Meeting may continue to operate effectively. **The Parish Council meeting is not a public meeting, but a meeting conducted in public.** On occasion confidential items may be discussed in which the press and members of the public are excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Meeting Notices and Agendas

The agenda is the official order of business for Parish Council meetings. By law, the Parish Council cannot take action on items that are not listed on the agenda.

Meeting notices and agendas are posted in the Parish Council's four notice boards, located at:

- Waldridge Parish Rooms
- Fenton Close
- Millennium Green
- Bus stop on the C11, next to the entrance to Falstone Drive

Notices and agendas are also available on the Parish Council's website - www.waldridgeparish.co.uk.

Copies of documents are available from the Parish Clerk in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Policy.

Written submissions

Members of the public may submit comments on any agenda item in writing (including by e-mail).

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. The Clerk will reply to such requests, informing the date of the meeting when comments will be discussed.

Where allowed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, request for confidentiality will be respected.

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

Public Participation Session

Although there is no statutory right for members of the public to speak at meetings, Waldrige Parish Council meets and makes its decisions in public, and is committed to community engagement, and as such, residents are warmly invited to attend and contribute during the Public Participation session.

Prior to the start of the meeting, there will be a period of 15 minutes set aside for questions and comments from members of the public. Speeches will be limited to a maximum of 5 minutes per speaker. Speakers may only speak one.

Questions relating to services provided by the Parish Council will be answered where possible at the meeting. If this is not possible, a written response will be provided within 14 days of the meeting, the content of which will be relayed to the next Parish Council meeting.

The Public Participation session will be controlled by the Chairman, and as such, questions and comments must be directed to the Chairman. The Chairman may exercise his or her right to curtail any speech, if, for example, the time limit is exceeded, inappropriate language is used, or if the speech is not relevant to the original question.

Requests to speak on agenda items

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.

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

Where possible, requests to speak should be notified to the Parish Clerk in writing, prior to the meeting date, indicating which agenda item the request relates to.

Requests to speak may also be submitted to the Clerk either verbally or in writing, prior to the start of the meeting. Final requests to speak may be made during the Public Participation session. Later requests will not be considered.

Where more than one person makes a request to speak on the same issue, the Chairman may ask that a spokesperson be appointed, to avoid repetition.

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 where necessary, to ensure that differing views are heard.

Persons invited to speak are required to give their name and address and must state their interest in the matter under discussion.

Contact Details

General enquiries or verbal requests to speak at a meeting may be made to the Parish Clerk by telephone on: 07961 790 990.

Written submissions should be sent to:
Waldridge Parish Council, 42 Bowmont Walk, Chester-le-Street, Durham DH2 3JB

Or by e-mail to: parishclerk.waldridgeparish@gmail.com