# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL

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## 1. Public Participation.

1.1 Public participation is defined as questions, statements or comments from members of the public. Public Participation will be allowed (Standing Order 3e) at the beginning of each scheduled meeting of the Council and the Committees.

1.2 Public participation shall take place before any speaker who is invited to a meeting of the Council and the Committee.

1.3 Public participation does not form part of the formal meeting and therefore will not be minuted.

1.4 Questions, statements or comments should be directed through the Chair (Standing Orders 3k) to the members of Council or the Committee (not an Officer). However, the Chair may, where appropriate, ask an Officer to reply.

1.5 Any speaker who is invited to give an update on their organisation or a project who attends any meeting of the Council may be subject to questions from the public. The speaker will be notified that there may be questions from both Councillors and members of the public. The speaker retains the right to decline answering questions from the public. The agenda will reflect whether or not the speaker welcomes questions from the public.

## 2. Time for Public Participation

2.1 The period of time designated for public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting (Standing Order 3f).

2.2 Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes (Standing Order 3g).

2.3 Due to the nature of the Planning Committee, comments from the general public at a Planning Committee meeting may be permitted by the Chair at other times during the meeting (Standing Order 3f).

## 3. Notice

3.1 A member of the public wishing to speak at a Council meeting should submit a request in advance of the meeting. They should either e-mail: ytc@yeovil.gov.uk or write to Yeovil Town Council, providing their full name; address and question, statement or comment; and whether they require a response. This request should be submitted by the Friday before the meeting, by noon, for a detailed response to be available at the meeting.

3.2 A member of the public wishing to speak but who has not submitted a request in advance of the meeting, must log their intention to speak with the Clerk of the meeting. They must provide their full name; address; topic they wish to raise; and whether they require a response. Questions that have not been submitted prior to the meeting, risk a detailed response not being available at the meeting. The Council reserves the right to provide a written response within an appropriate time frame for these questions.

3.3 In accordance with Standing Order 3h, a question shall only require a response at the meeting should an appropriate answer be available.

## 4. Public Participation at the Meeting

4.1 The Chair will direct the order of speaking (Standing Orders 3l).

4.2 The speaker may be asked to stand (if they are able) when they address the meeting (Standing Orders 3j).

4.3 The speaker will be restricted to 3 minutes and will be stopped should their question or comment exceed the allowance. There will be no further input from the person asking the question unless clarification is required.

4.4 Where a question is asked, the answer may take the form of:

(a) a direct oral response;
(b) where the desired information is contained in a publication of the Council, the speaker shall be directed to that publication; or
(c) where the reply to the question cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer will be provided.

4.5 Questions, statements and comments are not for debate, other than to refer to a Committee should that be necessary.

4.6 If there is a group of people attending to speak about a particular item, then a representative should be nominated to speak on behalf of the group.

## 5. Scope of Public Participation

5.1 The Chair may disallow any question, statement or comment if it:

- is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Town Council;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- relates to an individual Councillor or Officer (these must follow the appropriate complaints procedure);
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

Yeovil Town Council
23rd April 2024
To be reviewed: March 2029
(subject to changes in legislation, recommended practice, operations)