

# Public Participation Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Bishop Auckland Town Council wishes to encourage public participation during its meetings as a means of public engagement.

Meetings of the Council and its Committees, which are normally held in the Town Council Building, Kingsway Court, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, are open to the public unless exempt or confidential matters are being discussed.

Notices are placed in the notice board outside the Newgate Centre giving information about the dates and times of meetings. The Council's meeting diary is available on the Council's website [www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk](http://www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk), together with agendas. Paper copies can be obtained from the Town Council on request.

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in regard to any item of business included in the agenda of the Council and its Committees. This takes place at the public questions item on the agenda only.

## 2. Written Questions

Members of the public who wish to submit a written question for the Council agenda should do so 7 clear days before the Council meeting. Questions should relate either to the powers and duties of the Council, or affect the Parish in some way. These will be entered on to a register which will be open to the public for inspection.

A period of 15 minutes has been allocated at each Council or Committee meeting for this purpose. Each person may speak once for 3 minutes only in respect of business itemised on the agenda.

Written questions submitted to the Council meeting may be debated by members, however, no decision will be made solely on the comments and representations made under a public participation session. A matter raised that falls under the remit of a particular committee may be deferred to the next meeting of the relevant committee.

Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances or which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister. A question will not be received by the Council or its Committees if it relates to a matter which has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

## 3. Verbal Questions

A verbal question or statement concerning an item on the agenda asked by a member of the public during a public questions session at a meeting will normally be taken into account during the subsequent discussion of that agenda item. However, the Chairman may also direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an immediate oral response or to an employee for a written or oral response.

If you wish to ask a question or give a statement, please contact a member of staff or advise the Chairman of the meeting.