

PART 4 – PUBLIC SPEAKING PROCEDURE RULES

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PUBLIC SPEAKING PROCEDURE RULES

1. CONDUCT EXPECTED OF PUBLIC SPEAKERS AT ANY COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEE MEETING

Public speakers will be expected to conduct themselves in an orderly manner and, in making their speeches, they should be mindful of the need to avoid making public statements that could be construed to be defamatory, frivolous or offensive and should refrain from making allegations regarding the conduct of individual councillors or officers.

42. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

- (a) Public participation at Council meetings shall be limited to 30 minutes.

Questions

- (b) Members of the public may ask the Mayor, the Leader, a lead councillor or a chairman of a committee questions relevant to the general work or procedure of the Council at ordinary meetings of the Council, subject to the following conditions:
- (i) A member of the public may ask only one question at a meeting.
 - (ii) In relation to each meeting at which a member of the public wishes to ask a question, notice specifying the question must be given in writing by the questioner and received by the Executive Head of Governance not later than ~~midnight~~ twelve noon on the fifth working day before the day of the meeting. ~~For the avoidance of doubt, this means that if the meeting is held on a Thursday, written notice of the question must be received by midnight on the Thursday of the previous week.~~
 - (iii) Only questions which the Executive Head of Governance considers appropriate and relevant to some matter on which the Council has powers or duties or which specifically affect the Borough will be accepted. The Executive Head of Governance, in consultation with the Mayor, Leader, appropriate lead councillor or chairman and questioner, may reword any question to bring it into proper form and to secure brevity.
 - (iv) In response to a question, the councillor to whom the question has been put will normally provide and circulate to the questioner and all councillors at the meeting a written answer which, together with the question, shall also be recorded in the minutes.
 - (v) The questioner may, without notice, ask one supplementary question if such a question arises from the answer given.
 - (vi) Questions, including any supplementary questions, will be asked and answered without discussion.

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- (vii) The Mayor, Leader, lead councillor or chairman may decline to answer a question, or nominate another councillor to answer it on their behalf.
- (viii) Any question or response under this Procedure Rule shall not exceed three minutes in length.

Statements

- (c) As an alternative to asking a question, a member of the public may address the Council for a period not exceeding three minutes on matters relevant to the general work or procedure of the Council, subject to the following conditions:
 - (i) In relation to each meeting at which a member of the public wishes to speak and following publication of the agenda, notice, including a summary of the subject matter, must be given in writing by the person to the Executive Head of Governance not later than twelve noon one ~~the third~~ working day before the day of the meeting. ~~For the avoidance of doubt, this means that if the meeting is held on a Thursday, written notice must be received by twelve noon on the Monday of that week.~~
 - (ii) That speakers wishing to use visual aids during their speeches shall submit them to the Executive Head of Governance no later than 12 noon one working day before the meeting
 - ~~(ii)~~(iii) The person addressing the meeting shall be advised to declare any current or prospective financial or personal interest they may have in the subject.
 - ~~(iii)~~(iv) The Leader, relevant lead councillor or chairman shall be entitled to respond to the statement and this shall not exceed three minutes in length.

Presentation of Petitions

- (d) See Petition Scheme in the Appendix to the Public Speaking Procedure Rules.

32. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES**Speaking at Meetings**

- (a) Subject to (b) below, members of the public may address or question the Leader/Executive or any committees on any items on the public agenda, subject to the following conditions and on the basis that this provision shall not apply to sub-committees:
 - (i) that, following publication of the agenda for the relevant meeting, notice must be given in writing by the person concerned to the Executive Head of Governance by twelve noon one working day before a meeting stating on which item(s) they wish to speak;
 - (ii) that speakers shall be advised to declare any current or prospective financial or personal interest they may have in the subject;
 - (iii) that speakers wishing to use visual aids during their speeches shall submit them to the Executive Head of Governance no later than 12 noon one working day before the meeting

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- ~~(iii)~~(iv) that speeches can be up to three minutes duration or longer at the chairman's discretion and councillors be afforded the opportunity to ask questions of the public speakers;
- ~~(iv)~~(v) that speakers do not engage in further debate once their speeches have been made;
- ~~(v)~~(vi) that there is a maximum of six speakers on any one agenda item, with the exception of the Planning Committee where there is a maximum of two speakers on any agenda item other than planning and related applications;
- ~~(vi)~~(vii) that speakers be taken in the order in which they have registered; and
- ~~(vii)~~(viii) that speeches precede the formal debate on each item by the Executive or committee concerned.

Speaking at Planning Committee Meetings on Planning and Related Applications

- (b) Any person wishing to address the Planning Committee on any item on the public agenda on a planning or related application may do so, provided that the qualifying number of representations have been received and subject to the following conditions:
 - (i) that, following publication of the agenda for the relevant meeting, notice must be given in writing by the person concerned to the Executive Head of Governance by twelve noon one working day before a meeting stating on which item(s) they wish to speak;
 - (ii) that speakers [be advised to](#) declare any current or prospective financial or personal interest they may have in the subject;
 - (iii) that a maximum of four persons (two speaking in opposition to and two speaking in support of an application) be permitted with each speaker being entitled to speak, for up to three minutes duration, on any one item;
 - (iv) that speeches precede the Committee's formal debate of each item;
 - (v) that there shall be no public speaking on an application previously deferred by the Committee (e.g. for a site visit) when that application is resubmitted for consideration;
 - (vi) that speakers shall not use visual aids during their presentations and shall not circulate material to councillors at the meeting.
 - (vii) that speakers have, in the opinion of the Executive Head of Governance, complied in all respects with such detailed scheme as may be approved by the Council from time to time.

Any person wishing to address the Planning Committee on any item on the public agenda relating to tree preservation orders or enforcement matters may do so, subject to conditions (i) to (vii) above.

Presentation of Petitions to Leader/Executive and other committees

- (c) See Petition Scheme in the Appendix to the Public Speaking Procedure Rules.

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- (d) Any petition submitted to the Council in respect of a planning or related application shall count as a single representation for the purpose of calculating the qualifying number of representations to facilitate public speaking at Planning Committee meetings referred to in paragraph (b) of this Procedure Rule.
- (e) A petition in respect of a planning or related application may be presented to the Planning Committee but no public speaking will be triggered by the presentation of the petition.

Invitation to Address Meetings

- (f) In addition to the provisions outlined above, the Leader/Executive or any committee may invite people other than officers and councillors to address them, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It may, for example, wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and councillors and officers in other parts of the public sector and may invite such people to attend.

43. SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING PROCEDURE RULES

- (a) Any motion to amend or revoke (but not to suspend) these Public Speaking Procedure Rules shall when proposed and seconded be referred without discussion to the next meeting of the Council for consideration.
- (b) Any of these Public Speaking Procedure Rules may be suspended as regards any business at the meeting where its suspension is moved.