

## STANWIX RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

### RULES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The following is derived from, but not restricted to, advice in the Parish Council's Standing Orders and Members Code of Conduct.

**Disruptive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public disrupts the meeting, the Council reserves the right to curtail their participation.**

**If a member of the public continues to disrupt the meeting after receiving a warning from the Chair, they will be asked to leave. If they refuse, the Police may be called to remove them.**

Members of the public are welcome to speak with councillors before or after meetings on an informal basis. Please refer to the note below on Informal Engagement.

**Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings.** Members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Council as observers.

**Members of the public have no legal right to speak** unless the Parish Council Chair authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, the Parish Council sets out a time for public participation at an agreed point in the meeting, during which members of the public may be invited to speak, make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of the business on the agenda.

**Members of the public must not take part in the Council's decision-making**, and the Council should not make any instant decisions at the request of the public on items not already on the agenda. As a matter of good practice, public participation is kept separate from Councillor debate.

Members of the public are welcome to stay for the remainder of the meeting after the public session but are not permitted to speak during the meeting unless permitted by resolution of the council.

Members of the public may be excluded by resolution of the Council for items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing, tenders, or legal matters).

#### **RULES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

- **Public Participation shall not exceed 20 minutes in total** unless directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- **The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 3 minutes.** The Clerk will monitor and record timings and will notify the speaker clearly when their time is up.
- **Public Participation is not designed for conversation or prolonged reciprocal discussion.** The 3-minute allowance is to present a viewpoint or issue to the Council; responses are not immediately necessary.

- **If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic, they should nominate one person to speak on their behalf.** This helps avoid duplication and ensures time is used effectively.
- Any handouts or written information brought to the meeting should be handed to the Clerk to avoid delaying or disrupting proceedings.
- **The Chair has the right to stop any question or statement deemed inappropriate and may stop the speaker from continuing.** If the speaker ignores the Chair's request, they will be asked to leave the meeting. If they refuse, the Police may be called to remove them.
- **Councillors and the Clerk will not respond to comments or questions raised by the public during the participation session.** If the topic is already on the agenda, it will be addressed during the meeting in accordance with Standing Orders.
- **Questions raised during public participation do not require a response, and there will be no debate or discussion by Councillors.** The Chair will determine whether a response is appropriate, and how it will be given (e.g. written or verbal response at a later date).
- Members of the public do not have a right to place items on the Council's agenda.
- **Members of the public may not dictate how items are recorded in the minutes.**
- A brief summary of topics raised will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. There will be no detailed or verbatim record.
- **All persons present must act respectfully towards others in attendance. Behaviour that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others is not acceptable.** All statements, questions, responses, challenges, complaints, or criticisms must be made politely.
- **All statements, questions and responses must relate to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature.** No personal references may be made to individuals present or absent.

### **Informal Engagement Before and After Meetings**

Members of the public are welcome to speak informally with parish councillors before or after a council meeting, provided that such conversations do not disrupt the preparation for or the conclusion of the meeting. Such conversations are intended to encourage positive engagement while upholding the integrity and proper functioning of the council's formal proceedings.

It should be noted that:

- **Councillors should not discuss items on the meeting agenda outside the formal meeting. This is in order to maintain transparency and prevent any perception of bias.**
- These discussions are informal and do not form part of the official council meeting or decision-making process.
- Councillors may refer members of the public to the Clerk if the matter raised requires formal action or inclusion on a future agenda.
- Members of the public should approach councillors respectfully and be mindful of their time and responsibilities.
- Any concerns or issues that require formal response or action should be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk.