

### **Public participation at Edenbridge Town Council and Committee meetings**

The Town Council and its Committee meetings are open to members of the public and press to attend. Most meetings do have a section on the agenda for public questions in its meetings.

The law does not require members of the public to attend where there may be confidential items on the agenda; this includes business of a confidential nature, such as legal, contractual or personnel matters. Councillors may agree to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion of that item. The outcome is recorded in the minutes.

Town Council and Committee meetings may be recorded. If you wish to contribute, please be aware that you may be recorded; Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulation 2014. The Council asks if anyone is intending to record a meeting to inform the Town Clerk so that appropriate arrangements can be made. (Visit .gov website for *open and accountable local government – a guide on attending meetings.*)

### **Guidelines for Council and Committee meetings:**

Members of the public may ask questions or make representations and give evidence during 'public questions', under the agenda item Public Questions. If you have expressed views on an agenda item, Councillors will take your comments into account when that item is discussed. Comments are to be addressed to the Chairman. Sometimes, Members of the Council may ask questions.

Members of the public may not address, or enter into a debate with, individual Councillors. Where possible, answers to questions will be given at the meeting. If not, the Chairman will advise when you will receive a response. (This could be because the item raised is not on the agenda.) Usually, residents are asked to speak for not more than 3 minutes, but Members may be flexible on this depending on how many other people want to speak. If several people wish to speak about the same issue, it may be helpful to appoint a spokesman. If you are invited to speak you will be required to state your name and address.

The minutes of the meeting will include a record of public questions (names and addresses are not minuted).

Standing Orders regulate Council and Committee meetings.

**Public participation at meetings:**

1. Public participation will be received under the agenda item 'public questions' only. The time allowed for Public Questions is 15 minutes.
2. The Chairman of the meeting will invite participants to speak. Once the public participation section has ended, members of the public will be able to remain in the meeting, but will not be able to speak.
3. A member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes unless the Chairman of the meeting uses his discretion to allow the period to be extended.
4. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
5. No paperwork/plans/photographs are allowed to be circulated by a speaker at the meeting. This must be done in advance of the date of the meeting if they wish the members to consider information other than that which is contained in the agenda papers.  
(The Chairman of the meeting can, at his discretion, reconsider this.)

**After Public Question Time**

Members of the public are welcome to stay and observe the rest of the meeting but may not participate in the deliberations of Council. *Council meetings are held in public but are not public meetings open for debate.*

In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman has discretion to invite a member of the public to speak on an agenda item during the meeting if, in the opinion of the Chairman that person has relevant information which will assist the Council with its deliberations.

**Please do not talk or make interruptions during Council business. If this happens, the meeting may have to be suspended until the member of the public has left the meeting.**

**MOBILES PHONES SHOULD BE TURNED OFF DURING THE MEETING.**