

## **Protocol for Members of the Public during a Council Meeting.**

Colgate Parish Council meets and makes its decisions in public and is committed to community engagement and therefore warmly invites members of the public, the press, the police, and ward councillors to attend meetings and contribute within the open forum. **A council meeting is not a public meeting**; it is a meeting held in public and there is no requirement in law to provide an opportunity for the public to question the council, but this council welcomes the opportunity to offer it.

Members of the public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct council business and interruptions during council business are not permitted. If, in the opinion of the Chairman, the business of the meeting is disrupted in any way, the Chairman will ask the person/s causing the disruption to be quiet and if they refuse then ask them to leave. Mobile phones must be switched off during the meeting.

Public participation is permitted when the Chair opens the meeting to the public and must be regarding items on any topic within the remit of the parish council. Written questions received in advance of the meeting are encouraged but not essential: if provided in advance this will make it easier for an answer to be prepared. The council will not enter into any substantive discussion on a question raised if it is unable to answer a question directly

Public participation will be for a maximum period of 10 minutes and will take place early on in the agenda so that councillors may consider views expressed when reaching decisions. Each member of the public will be allowed a maximum of 2 minutes until the 10 minutes is reached. It is prudent for members of the public to advise the Clerk if they want to book a slot to speak during the time the meeting is opened to the public. If a question relates to a topic on the agenda, then the Chairman may decide to address it immediately or carry it forward for a response at a later date.

Members of the public should note that the council is only allowed to take decisions on topics that are publicised on the agenda, excepting items delegated to the clerk. Agenda items may be suggested no later than 1 week before each parish council meeting.

All communication at meetings shall be through the Chairman. Councillors may not address questions raised by members of the public except through and with the permission of the Chairman. Members of the public may not address individual councillors except through, and with the permission of the Chairman. Councillors and members of the public must respect the role of the Chairman and may be asked to leave if in the opinion of the Chairman they breach this protocol in a way that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.

This council will provide an opportunity via the agenda for the police and ward councillors to attend and report to meetings and respond to any questions or queries from Council.

The Chairman may, at his or her discretion, invite a member of the public to speak on an agenda item during the parish council meeting if, in the opinion of the Chairman, that individual has relevant information not available to the parish council which will help in its deliberations.

Extract from Colgate PC Standing Orders (2022)

- a The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) shall not exceed 10 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.
- b Subject to standing order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than 2 minutes.
- c In accordance with standing order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairperson of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- d A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chairperson of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- e A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairperson of the meeting.
- f Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairperson of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- g **Subject to standing order 3(m), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To “report” means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.**
- h **A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.**