

## **PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT WHITCHURCH & GANAREW GROUP PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**Members of the public have a legal right to attend the monthly parish council meetings of Whitchurch & Ganarew Group Parish Council.**

**Members of the public have no legal right to speak at parish council meetings, however in accordance with its objective of community engagement, the council sets aside time for members of the public who wish to address questions or comments to the parish council.**

**The following protocol applies to public participation at parish council meetings:**

- Members of the public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct council business and interruptions are not permitted.
- This protocol has been developed based on best practice by other parish councils and advice from the Local Government Association.
- The protocol exists to ensure that public participation is conducted politely, respectfully and in a structured and measured way within a reasonable timeframe.

### **Duration and timescale:**

Public participation, shown as **Agenda Item 1** will be for a maximum period of 20 minutes in advance of the normal business of the parish council.

### **Duration of each question:**

A maximum of 5 minutes is permitted for a member of the public to ask a question. In the event that more than one member of the public wishes to ask a question on the same subject, a spokesperson will be nominated to ask that question.

### **Form of questions:**

Public participation is permitted regarding items on any topic within the remit of the parish council. The parish clerk will be able to give guidance on this.

Written questions received in advance of the meeting are encouraged. If provided in advance this will make it easier for a question to be answered. Questions presented at the time of the meeting may result in an answer not being able to be given and deferment will occur.

### **Provision of responses:**

If the 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, depending on whether the question needs a quick response.

**Discussion of topics by councillors:**

Members of the public should note that the council is only allowed to take decisions committing the council on topics that are publicised on the agenda, except where a response has a deadline prior to the next scheduled meeting of the council.

The parish council meeting is not the correct forum for conducting debates between councillors and members of the public.

**Other ways to ask questions:**

Members of the public should be aware that rather than bringing questions to the entire council and those members of the public present, questions may be posted or emailed to the parish clerk.

Agenda items may be suggested no later than 2 weeks before each parish council meeting, however the agenda is subject to the approval of the chairman and the clerk.

**Role of the chairman:**

All communication at the meeting 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. The chairman's decision is final on public participation. Councillors and members of the public must respect the role of the chairman.

**This protocol will be available for members of the public to read at each parish council meeting and it will also be available on the parish council website.**

**Protocol adopted at council on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015.**

Signed: *G. Hiscox*

Chairman