

HELMINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Prepared by: Parish Clerk
Adopted by Resolution of : Helmingham Parish Council **on** 15th May 2026
Reviewed & Re-Adopted:
Date of Next Review: May 2027

In preparing this Protocol the Parish Council has referred to guidance published by the National Association of Local councils (NALC).

Participation in the Public Forum by Members of the Public

All members of the public and press are welcome to attend meetings of Helmingham Parish Council (HPC) and have a legal right to do so under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. Although there is no statutory right for members of the public to speak at these meetings, HPC meets and makes its decisions in public and is committed to community engagement and as such residents are warmly invited to attend and contribute during public time.

From time to time, confidential items may be discussed in which case the press and members of the public are excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

The Parish Council meeting is not a public meeting but a meeting conducted in public. 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.

The agenda is the official order of business for Parish Council meetings. By law, the Parish Council cannot take action on items or issues that are not listed in the agenda. The agenda will indicate when the public participation will take place. This will be early on in the agenda so that Parish Councillors may take into account any views expressed when reaching their decisions.

Public participation will be for a period of fifteen minutes unless otherwise directed by the Chairman and is an opportunity for members of the public to (a) make representations, (b) answer questions or (c) give evidence relating to the business to be transacted.

In the event of several people wishing to speak either in favour or against the issue, the respective group(s) will be requested to select one spokesperson to address the Council. One person wishing to speak either in support or against the issue will be allowed to address the Council even if no other person wishes to present an opposing argument.

Written statements or questions must be received by the Clerk by noon on the day prior to the meeting, this is to allow sufficient time for research and preparation of an appropriate response.

The Chairman has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted.

A maximum of three minutes is permitted for a member of the public to speak. Supplementary comments or questions are solely at the discretion of the Chairman.

A person should raise their hand when requesting to speak. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chairman of the meeting.

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.

Questions will be answered by the Chairman or the Clerk following which the questioner will be allowed to ask one supplementary question. If the supplementary question is not able to be answered at the meeting, a written reply will be sent to the questioner as early as possible after the meeting, but in any case, within 14 days of the meeting whenever possible.

Neither Councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. A question raised by a member of the public during a public speaking session shall not require a response at the meeting and there should be no debate or discussion between the Council and the public. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given. Members of the public are therefore requested to leave their contact details with the Clerk before leaving the Council meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query.

Councillors with a prejudicial interest in an agenda item will be allowed to speak during this agenda item (and then leave the room when the item is considered).

Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto the Council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.

If the issue is on the agenda, then it will be discussed under the appropriate item.

A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. But libelous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.

All persons' present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates him or her. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.

All statements, questions and responses must be related to the facts of the matter and not be personal in nature. There should be no reference to personal views on any person.

Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person. Members of the public should respect the rulings of the Chairman. The Chairman has an inherent right to exclude a disorderly person. Members of the public have a legal right to be present so excluding one or more of them will be a last resort. Alternatively, if there is serious disorder the Chairman may decide to adjourn the meeting for a short time to allow order to be restored.