



Public Participation at Committee Meetings

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Introduction

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Part 1 - Can I attend a meeting?

Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and the majority of Committees are open to the public who may attend and observe.

Alternately you can watch some meetings. The Council, Cabinet and some Committees are also webcast. Further information is at <http://www.devoncc.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter, blogging or other forms of social media to report on proceedings at meetings. Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is normally asked to advise the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer in attendance so that those present may be made aware.

Members of the public will be treated with respect and courtesy when attending meetings of the County Council. They will be listened to and everyone who has registered will be able to be present/speak without interruption or intimidation. For further information please see our [public behaviour protocol](#).

It is therefore expected that members of the public listen to the proceedings and respect the views and experiences of other people contributing.

Part 2 - Public Participation

Members of the public are able to ask a question of the Leader or Cabinet Members at meetings of the full Council or at meetings of the Council's Cabinet.

In certain circumstances presentations or representations may be made to the Council, Development Management Committee, Scrutiny Committees, the Highways and Traffic Orders Committees or the Public Rights of Way Committee.

At meetings of the Council, it must either be a representation or a question, not both.

To ask a question or make a representation or presentation you must live in the area served by the County Council.

You may also, at any time, deliver or present a petition to the Council or one of its Committees (depending on the subject matter). There are various actions which the Council may take (depending upon the numbers of signatures your petition has), such as a senior officer attending a scrutiny committee, consideration of your petition at a Council meeting,

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holding a public meeting or researching the matter further. For further information you may like to read our Petition Scheme in [part 4 of the Constitution](#)

Part 3 - Are there any restrictions on what questions I may ask?

No, provided the question is not frivolous or defamatory and does not concern a confidential issue which would normally be considered in private. Otherwise you may ask a question about any matter which relates to the responsibilities of the Council or the Cabinet. If you are not sure about which meeting is responsible please contact the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat who will be happy to advise you.

Part 4 - How do I table my question?

If you wish to submit a formal, written question then you must put it in writing (by letter or email) before 12 noon on the fourth working day before the date of the meeting (i.e. if the meeting is on a Friday then the question must be submitted by the preceding Monday, taking into account any Bank Holidays). The contact details for the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat are shown on the back of this leaflet. Where your question relates to a report on an agenda for a meeting and that report is not available by this time you may nonetheless be entitled to ask a question in certain circumstances. Please ring the number referred to above for clarification.

All questions will be printed in the order received and will be circulated to everyone at the meeting together with a written response. You will not be asked to read out your question but you will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising from the answer you have received. This must be a question, not a statement.

When you submit a question it would be helpful if you could also provide a telephone number so that we can contact you if there is any ambiguity in your question or if for some reason no reply can be given.

Part 5 - How much time is allowed for petitions and/or questions?

At Cabinet, there is a maximum of 30 minutes in total. If there are a lot of questions and yours cannot be dealt with in that time then you will be sent the response by letter or email. At a full Council meeting, this 30 minutes time allocation will also include oral representations made by members of the public.

Part 6 - How many questions may I ask?

You may only ask one question at any meeting of the Council or the Cabinet. If more than one question is received or a single question contains a number of component questions, then only the first question will be accepted.

Part 7 - If I put in a question do I actually have to be there?

No. If you cannot attend the answer to your question will be published with the minutes of the meeting and will be available on the website. If the meeting was webcast then the answer will also be available with the archive for that meeting. If you do attend you will be invited to sit at the place reserved for you while your question is dealt with.

Part 8 - Is there a limit on the length of any question?

No, but it would be best to keep it as short as possible to avoid any misunderstanding. 50 words are normally sufficient to frame a clear and direct question.

Part 9 - How will the answer to my question be given?

The answer to your question will be put in writing and will be circulated at the meeting together with the question and published on the web with the minutes of the meeting.

Part 10 - Once my question has been asked, may I ask another?

Yes, you will be entitled to ask one 'supplementary' question arising from the answer given to your original question.

Part 11 - Presentations to Council, Scrutiny, Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees

Representations and / or Presentations may also be made to any ordinary meeting of the Full Council, Scrutiny Committees, Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees. The representation and the name of the person making the representation will be recorded in the minutes.

Part 12 - Representations to Council

Any member of the public who lives in the area served by the County Council may make oral representations on any matter relating to the functions of the Council. Such representations will be limited to 3 minutes, within the overall time allowed of 30 minutes. While your views and comments may be acknowledged by the Chair of the meeting, you will not receive detailed 'answers' to any points included in your presentation.

If you wish to make such a representation, you should, via email or letter, submit a brief outline of the points or issues you wish to raise before 12 noon 4 working days before the meeting takes place.

Part 13 - Representations to the Scrutiny Committee Meeting

At Scrutiny Committee meetings, any member of the public who is resident in the area served by the County Council may make oral representations on any substantive matter listed on the Agenda of any Scrutiny Committee. Such representations will be limited to 3 minutes per person, within an overall time limit of 15 minutes. If you wish to make such a representation, you should, via email or letter, submit a brief outline of the points or issues you may wish to raise, before 12 noon 4 working days before the meeting. As outlined above, you will not receive detailed 'answers' to any points that you might raise.

Part 14 - Presentations to Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees

Presentations may also be made to Development Management, Highways and Traffic Orders and Public Rights of Way Committees in relation to certain types of application, Traffic or Footpath Orders respectively, to be considered by those Committees at the meeting at which the Order is to be considered. The rules governing these presentations are set below:-

- * the presentation will be strictly limited to 3 minutes;
- * participants will be invited to make their presentation from the Committee table where a position will be allocated for their use;
- * presentations will be made following a short introduction from the appropriate officer of the County Council;

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- * there will be no right to ask questions of officers or Members;
- * there will be no right to participate in the debate;
- * presentations will normally be on the basis of 1) Applicant 2) Objector and 3) Supporter as appropriate but detailed operation of the procedure will be entirely at the discretion of the Chair;
- * There may be presentations from applicants, objectors and supporters, if one decides not to participate the others will not be precluded from making a presentation;
- * where a planning application (or ROMP application) Traffic Order or Public Footpath Order arouses a large number of objections or support, those concerned may be asked to nominate a representative to present their views. In such cases the identity of the spokesperson must also be made known to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat prior to the start of the meeting. If necessary the Chief Executive will draw this requirement to the attention of the objectors/ supporters;
- * participants will only be able to make one presentation to the Development Management Committee on a particular application -no matter how many times the same application comes before the Committee and participants may not speak when the Committee is only considering the report of a site visit.
- * if applicants, objectors or supporters wish to make a presentation to any of these Committees they must give notification to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat, County Hall, Exeter (Tel: 01392 382299) by 12 noon on the fourth working day before the relevant meeting. It will be up to the applicant, objector or supporter to register their wish to make a presentation. The County Council will not invite participation or send reminders. Alternately you may contact us in writing or by email. The contact details are shown below.

Part 15 - How will I know what is on the agenda for a meeting?

Agendas are normally published one week in advance of the meeting and are available at the Council's offices at County Hall and [online](#)