

TARVIN PARISH COUNCIL

Guidelines for the Public Participation at Tarvin Parish Council Meetings

Introduction

Meetings of Tarvin Parish Council are not public meetings, but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chairman authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Tarvin Parish Council sets out a time (known as The Open Forum) for public participation at Council meetings when members of the public are invited to speak. This is done because Council does not hold regular surgeries.

Open Forum guidelines when Council has not invited a member of the public to attend and speak on a particular matter.

1.1 The Open Forum is normally the only part of the meeting in which residents can make representations to the Parish Council about matters relating to Tarvin Parish. In very exceptional circumstances the Chairman of the meeting may allow a member of the public to speak during a meeting.

1.2 A 15-minute period is allocated to the Open Forum at each meeting. This may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.

1.3 Each resident wishing to speak should begin by introducing themselves.

1.4 It is acceptable for a representative to speak on behalf of a resident provided that the resident is in attendance.

1.5 The Open Forum must not be used to criticise or complain about individuals, nor use it as a platform for Party political campaigning, nor to raise confidential matters.

1.6 The Open Forum is not intended for residents to have a debate or discussion with Councillors, as such Councillors will not discuss the matter raised at that time or respond to questions unless requested by the Chairman of the meeting.

1.7 If an item is raised which is on the agenda of that meeting comments made will be considered by the Councillors during that agenda item.

1.8 Whilst residents are very welcome to stay to hear the discussion, please note that once the Open Forum is closed residents can only listen and not take part in the meeting.

1.9 If a matter is raised which is not on the agenda the matter may be put on a future agenda, but it cannot lawfully be discussed at the current meeting. If an issue is raised which requires an answer, but not consideration by the Council the Chairman may choose to respond or ask the Clerk or another Councillor to do so.

1.10 Matters of a confidential or sensitive nature should be raised with the Clerk of the Council before the meeting or at a different time.

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

1.12 The Chairman must not be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. Members of the public do not have a right to force items onto a future Council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes.

1.13 Councillors will only speak during the Open Forum if requested to do so by the Chairman of the meeting.

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

1.15 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.

1.16 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.

Guidelines when Council has invited a member of the public to attend and speak on a particular matter.

2.1 The length of the Open Forum will be determined by the Chairman of the meeting.

2.2 The person(s) invited by Council to address the meeting will be given priority to speak and the address may be followed by a question-and-answer session. Councillors and members of the public may ask questions through the Chairman of the meeting.

Once the invited person has finished normal guidelines will apply for the rest of the Open Forum.

Guidelines Adopted by Council November 2025

Next Review September 2027