**CHIDHAM & HAMBROOK PARISH COUNCIL**

**PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**Public Questions, Comments or Representations**

The public has a statutory right to attend Parish Council meetings and to observe. It is a courtesy extended by local councils to have a section on the agenda where the public is invited to submit questions at a specified period during the Council meeting.

The Chair has a duty to run an orderly meeting. He/she may take any reasonable steps to ensure compliance.

This Parish Council has arrangements for hearing members of the public at a Public Open Forum section at council meetings. Fifteen (15) minutes in total is allocated for this section of the agenda; three (3) minutes for each member of public to speak.

The following protocol for the Public Open Forum will be followed:

1. Members of the public who participate in this section of the agenda must specify their name and address to confirm their residency within the parish.
2. Only matters relating to the agenda will be accepted. This must relate particularly to the business of the Council and be a matter for which the Council has responsibility or relate to the wellbeing of the parish.
3. The Chair will formally acknowledge the matter raised and decide in which order matters will be heard.
4. If a member of the public does not wish to disclose their credentials, the question/issue should be forwarded in writing to the Clerk in advance of the meeting.
5. The identities of all those members of public who make comments during this session are recorded in the minutes.
6. Members of the public who object to their contribution being minuted can express their views in writing, in confidence, if required. The record of such a written representation ‘in confidence’ may however still be disclosable under the freedom of Information Act 2000.
7. The Chair will inform the questioner as to how the matter will be dealt with. This may be an immediate oral response, or a more detailed written response within 14 days. Alternatively the Chair may ask the Clerk to deal with the matter or include the matter on the agenda for a subsequent next meeting.
8. The Chair may reject a question or a supplementary question if it is defamatory, frivolous or abusive. Question that are substantially the same as a matter raised in the previous six (6) months or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information may also be rejected. Where a question has been rejected a letter will be sent to the questioner setting out the reasons for the rejection.
9. If any person has more than one question only their first question will be deal with. If there is sufficient time available after all other questions have been heard, the Chair may allow the person’s other question to be asked.
10. All those present will act respectfully and not in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others. Offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. The Clerk and/or the Chair reserve the right to curtail the contribution of and seek to exclude anyone acting in this manner.
11. Councils are required to allow members of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings, and report on its meetings. Prior permission/ notification is required to carry out such activities and to inform the Clerk so that all necessary arrangements can be made.
12. The minutes of Council meetings are not recorded verbatim. Members of the public do not have the right to insist on how matters are minuted unless it is a matter of fact. Corrections to the minutes are dealt with under Matters Arising at the net Council meeting.

Adopted by the Parish Council on 1 July 2021