

Public Forum Actions at Town Council Meetings Policy

December 2023

The opportunity for members of the public to put forward questions at public meetings of the Council and its Committees is long established by Bury St Edmunds Council and forms an component of community engagement. It is important that the arrangements for such engagement are clear and understood by all parties.

The Chairman of public meetings of the Town Council or its Committees will conduct the public forum to accord with the following:

- Members of the public will be limited to one question, lasting no more than 3 minutes, and one supplementary question relating to the first answer
- In exceptional circumstances and where time allows the Chairman has the discretion to allow more than one question from a member of the public
- A question may be rejected if it does not relate to a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or is not relevant to the Town; is defamatory, frivolous or offensive; is substantially the same as a question as has been put at a meeting of the Council in the preceding six months; or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information
- Where a questioner fails to observe the above criteria, the Chairman shall first issue a warning to that effect. If the questioner continues to fail to observe the above criteria (either immediately or at a subsequent question time) the Chairman will advise that he/she will not be allowed to continue with the question and may not speak further
- At any time during the public forum the Chairman may deal with any member of the public who interrupts the proceedings and, after warning, order that person leave the meeting and may adjourn the meeting for such period as is necessary to restore order. Where a member of the public whose identity and address is known has been warned or ejected under the above criteria, he/she shall be notified in writing of the action taken and reasons for so doing. Council may require such person to refrain from future verbal questioning and to table any future questions in writing to the Town Clerk at least three working days in advance of any Council/Committee meeting