

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS POLICY

The City of Hamilton Council wishes to encourage public participation during its meetings in order to use this as a means of obtaining the views of the public. However, the Council recognises that rules must control the manner of participation in order that the meetings may continue to operate effectively.

In allowing public participation the Council is aware that this forms only one means of seeking views of the public, and that no decisions other than undertaking further research or writing to relevant bodies can be taken at the meeting where the matter is raised unless it is already included in the agenda for that meeting.

Public participation provides an opportunity to ask questions and to make brief representations to the Council.

Any petition presented to Council will be received; any further discussion will be referred to a future meeting unless already included in the agenda for that meeting.

The following rules must be observed for public participation at meetings:

1. Public participation will be an agenda item at every Council meeting. Members of the press and public may be excluded by resolution for example at any Council meeting where personnel or contract matters are on the agenda.
2. Public participation provides an opportunity to ask questions or make brief representations. Although it is preferable for questions or details of the representation to be submitted to the Secretary prior to the relevant meeting, this is not a requirement.
3. Public participation will take place at an early stage in the meeting as dictated by the agenda. The time allowed for public participation will normally be 15 minutes in total. This could be varied at the discretion of the Mayor with the consent of the meeting.

4. Those elected members who have declared a prejudicial interest and wish to speak will be heard first. After speaking the member must leave the room before any other representations are made. They cannot hear the representations of others. In the event that more than one elected member declares an interest and wishes to speak other members having declared an interest must leave the room.

5. Each member of the public will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes to speak. Any individual can only speak once in any meeting except to ask for clarification of a reply.

6. The Mayor will determine in what order members of the public will be allowed to ask their questions.

In answer to questions about services the Council will provide answers where possible at the meeting. If this is not possible a written response will be given to the questioner within 10 working days of the meeting, the contents of which will be relayed to Council.

Public participation forms part of the council meeting and will be minuted.

However this is normally the only opportunity for the public to speak at a meeting. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings at any meeting, the Mayor may, after warning, order that the person be removed from the meeting and may adjourn the meeting for such time as is necessary to restore order.