



HOLY ISLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Windsor Cottage, 3 Lewin's Lane, Holy Island, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2SB
Clerk: John A Bevan Tel: (01289) 389359 Email: holyipc@btinternet.c

PARISH COUNCIL PROCEDURES – QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

The Parish Council has been considering how to manage the Public Question period during Parish Council Meetings to allow members of the public to air any concerns they have without prejudicing the smooth running of the meeting. I have based the following on the policy laid down in the Holy Island Parish Council Standing Orders adopted at the Holy Island Parish Council Meeting on Monday May 20th 2013 and on the guidance and legal advice given by the Society of Local Council Clerks.

It is important to remember that a Parish Council Meeting is not a general public meeting. It is a meeting of the Parish Council to discuss items on the formal agenda. Members of the public may only speak during a specified period set aside for public questions and statements. Outside this period the public are present as observers not participants and may only speak if invited to do so by the Chairman.

The Council's intention is to have a procedure which enables members of the public to make the best use of the Public Question time and to be able easily to raise matters of concern to them with the expectation that the matter will be considered by the Council. To do this the Councillors and Clerk may need to do some research. Therefore if the matter is to be discussed by the Parish Council and, as far as possible, an informed answer given or a decision taken at the meeting at which the question is raised, then the Clerk must be given notice of the question at least 5 clear days before the meeting.

If a question is asked without due notice then it will be recorded but cannot be discussed at that meeting. If the question is solely seeking information then a Councillor or the Clerk will respond orally or in writing directly to the questioner when an answer is available. Only questions covering matters which are the responsibility of the Parish Council can be accepted.

The format of the Public Question time as laid out in the Holy Island Parish Council Standing Orders and based on the best practice advised by the Society of Local Council Clerks is as follows:

All questions must be addressed to the Chairman.

Only one person can speak at one time.

If more than one person wishes to speak the Chairman shall direct the order of speaking.

The questioner may speak for no more than 3 minutes.

A maximum of 15 minutes will be allowed for public questions.

While questions can be given directly to the Clerk it is preferable for them to be discussed with a Parish Councillor first. They are the elected representatives of the community and are there to take up matters of concern. The Councillor could then, if appropriate, raise the matter on behalf of the member of the public as part of the main agenda. This does not prevent the questioner also raising the matter during the Public Question time period.

There are some restrictions on the questions that can be considered. The following are excluded:

Matters over which the Parish Council has no authority or influence.

Where they are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances.

Are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, tribunal or government.

Have been the subject of a decision by the Council in the last 6 months.

John Bevan.

Clerk to Holy Island Parish Council.

MASTER