



# ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROTOCOL**

Alston Moor Parish Council is committed to providing opportunities for people who live in the parish to have a say in the Council's work. This protocol sets out how you can get involved by making comments or asking questions at meetings.

The scheme applies to anyone who:

- lives in the parish, or
- represents a business or voluntary group which operates in the parish.

## **QUESTIONS**

You are not obliged to give prior notice to ask a question. But it would be helpful if you would let the clerk know before the meeting starts that you wish to ask a question or make a comment under Public Participation. This will assist the Chair with the smooth running of the meeting. Public participation is taken very soon after the start of the meeting and will usually be the first main item on the agenda. If you wish to ask a question you may say a few words by way of introduction – no more than 3 (three) minutes - before asking your question. If a number of people wish to ask a similar question, the Chair may limit the number of questions on the subject. The Chair's decision is final. When speaking you must keep to the subject; please avoid using offensive or abusive language. You must also keep to time. Members of the council may wish to speak and ask you questions. The clerk may speak to offer advice. The Chair may simply respond to your question without opening the matter up for debate. Much will depend on the nature of your question and whether the matter has been discussed previously. You have no right of reply. Questions and answers will normally be limited to five minutes per question. Where a number of people wish to speak on the same matter the Chair may set a time limit for questions on that matter. You may ask one supplementary question to clarify a particular point relating to your original question. Please note that public participation is normally time limited to 30 minutes. You cannot ask the same question again at a later meeting unless there has been a significant change in the circumstances relating to the subject matter of the question. The final decision as to whether such a question will be accepted is for the Chair of the meeting.

## **COMMENTS**

Comments may relate to any item on the Council's agenda. You may speak for up to two minutes. Most comments tend to relate to the Council's consideration of planning consultations. If your comment relates to a planning consultation the Chair may invite you to

speak when the item is reached on the agenda. You may make your comments and then after any other public contributions the Chair will declare public participation closed and the Council will then proceed to consider the planning consultation and reach a view. There is no opportunity for questions at this stage.

If a number of people wish to make comments on the same planning application, the Chair may limit the number of speakers in the interests of ensuring that there is sufficient time to deal with all items on the agenda. The Chair's decision is final.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

A small number of matters are excluded from the scope of the Council's Public Participation Scheme. These are:

- the circumstances of an individual or a member of staff;
- matters covered by legal or other proceedings;
- party political matters or confidential information;
- anything the Chair considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. All meetings are open to the public unless confidential information is being discussed. If this happens it will usually be towards the end of the meeting. You should be aware that the Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications. This means that the local planning authority must consult the Parish Council before it takes a decision on the application, although the Parish Council must respond within the statutory timescales. The Parish Council may support or object to an application or it may submit comments. Any response must be based on material planning considerations. The local planning authority must have regard to the Parish Council's comments, but the final decision on a planning application rests with the local planning authority.