

PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEES

1. This protocol exists to give clarity in relation to speaking by or on behalf of third parties or planning applicants, at a Planning Committee meeting.
2. Two weeks before the relevant Planning Committee, a decision will be taken on which items should be placed on the agenda for that meeting.
3. For those applications that are to be placed on the agenda for the meeting, a letter will be sent to people who have responded to notification of the application saying:
 - a) That the report is likely to be on the agenda for the meeting, including the date, time and venue.
 - b) That the full report including recommendations will be available 5 clear working days before the meeting from the appropriate committee administrator or via the Council website.
 - c) That the committee administrator should be contacted 5 clear working days before the meeting to verify that the application is on the agenda. The intention to make a statement on it must be confirmed by midday two working days before the meeting.
 - d) Intended items cannot be guaranteed to make a particular agenda.
 - e) That, pursuant to the provisions of this Protocol, they may be entitled to speak at the meeting.
4. The Applicant will be invited to make a statement to Planning Committee, if the Council receives a request by a third party under clause 5, in relation to their application.
5. For the purposes of this protocol a third party is a person directly affected by a planning application but who, unlike the applicant, has no statutory right of appeal against the Planning Committee decision.
6. Third parties wishing to speak at a Planning Committee meeting must contact the committee administrator by no later than midday two clear working days preceding the Committee (This will in normal circumstances be midday on Monday, unless there is an intervening public holiday). Such advance notice is necessary in the interest of fairness to give the applicant notice of the intention and to offer them the opportunity of reply.
7. In implementing this Protocol, the Council will have due regard to its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010¹. Any third party wishing due consideration to be given to their protected characteristics should ensure that

¹ The protected characteristics specified in the Equalities Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion & belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy & maternity, and marriage & civil partnership.

these are fully disclosed at the point of registering to speak with the committee administrator. Note that possessing a protected characteristic is not a guarantee that a third party will be allowed to speak.

8. Anyone due to speak at Planning Committee pursuant to this Protocol must arrive at the meeting venue 15 minutes in advance of the meeting, where they will be met by the committee administrator.
9. Where both a third party and applicant/agent wish to speak, the third party will speak first.
10. A third party or applicant may ask someone else, such as an agent or representative, to make a statement on their behalf.
11. Only one third party speaker (or their agent/representative) (subject to point 12) will normally be allowed to make a statement on a planning application. Where there are multiple applications in respect of the same site that are taken together, this restriction will apply as if only one application is being made.
12. For large planning applications the Chair of the Planning Committee may allow more than one third party speaker. Where time constraints allow, any changes to the speaking arrangements will be detailed in the letter sent to third parties (point 3) and applicants (point 4).
13. All public speaking at Planning Committee is at the discretion of the Chair, who has the discretion to override any other provisions of this Protocol save for point (7).
14. Where more than one third party has registered their interest to speak, the committee administrator will encourage the third parties to nominate a spokesperson. If agreement cannot be reached by the third parties on who will speak, the Chair shall decide, having due regard to any protected characteristics.
15. To enable the Chair to select the third-party speakers pursuant to point 14, the committee administrator shall provide the Chair with a list of those who have successfully registered to speak, including any disclosed protected characteristics, in good time before the selection decision is required.
16. Where an item has been deferred from a previous meeting of the Planning Committee (in addition to point 17 below), further representations will be permitted in relation to that item. They may cover the same points made when the application was previously considered. This is because the membership of the Planning Committee for that meeting might have changed since the previous meeting.
17. Where a report has been deferred from a previous meeting, and speakers addressed that previous meeting, a brief note of the main points made by those speakers will normally be included in the report when it returns to the Planning Committee for decision. The logistics of report production mean that it will not be

practical for speakers to check that their comments have been correctly incorporated. Speakers are, therefore, advised to provide a written summary of their speech if they wish to have greater certainty that their words will be accurately reported.

18. At the meeting, speakers will be advised to direct their presentation to reinforcing or amplifying representations already made to the Council in writing.
19. Speakers may distribute a written summary of their speech to members of the Planning Committee but documents not previously submitted should not normally be circulated at the meeting, as all parties may not have time to consider them and councillors may not be able to give proper consideration to the matter. Speakers will be advised that substantive documents should be submitted to the planning officer as early as possible but by no later than midday on the date of the meeting.
20. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes, apart from when an interpreter is used or a speaker has an impediment which impacts their ability to speak. In such situations, the chair will exercise their discretion on the time permitted.
21. If the speaker has a disability and/or requires a reasonable adjustment to enable them to participate in the meeting they should contact the Committee administrator in advance of the meeting so that arrangements can be made. The Council welcomes the participation of speakers with a disability.
22. If the speaker's first language isn't English and they wish to address the Planning Committee, they can either bring someone to interpret or make a statement on their behalf. If a speaker plans to address the Planning Committee in a language that is not English, it can also sometimes be helpful if a written summary of their speech is provided in English (see point (17) above).
23. The Chair will normally organise the meeting to ensure that applications involving speakers are dealt with first.
24. The speakers will be invited to make their statements after any member declarations and after the officers have presented the application but before the Committee debates the application.
25. Committee members will not question the speakers.
26. The Committee will then debate the application and (where appropriate) reach a decision.
27. Third parties, applicants and their agents or representatives will not take part in the debate. They will not be allowed to question officers, Committee members or each other.

Revised December 2023