

TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL

The Town and Hundred of Tenterden



A Corporate Member of the Cinque Ports

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WISHING TO SPEAK AT MEETINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OR ITS COMMITTEES

Tenterden Town Council welcomes and encourages input from residents of the parish. This can be in writing, or by speaking to individual councillors (who are listed at <https://bit.ly/TTCllrs>) or the Town Clerk, or by making representations at meetings. In the latter case, so that meetings are run in an efficient and orderly way, allowing everyone to contribute if they want to and to prevent domination by dominant individuals, the council's standing orders set limits and procedures to be followed, and this guidance summarises the effect of these.

- a) Agendas for meetings of Tenterden Town Council and its committees are published three clear working days in advance of the date of the meeting.
- b) All meetings of the Town Council and its committees are usually held at the Town Hall, either in the Assembly Room or in the Mayor's Parlour. However, should another location be used, this will be stated on the agenda¹.
- c) Meetings of Tenterden Town Council and its committees usually commence at **7.00pm**. As several committees might meet in one evening, you might need to wait for the meeting at which you wish to speak.
- d) If you wish to address a committee, you must submit **written notice** of your intention to speak to the Town Clerk's office **no later than midday** on the day of the meeting, giving a brief outline of the subject on which you wish to speak.
- e) You do not have to notify the Town Clerk's office if you wish to speak at a meeting of the Town Council; however, if you wish to ask a question/s then we suggest you complete the *Questions to Town Council* form available here: <https://bit.ly/TTCmeetings>, and this must be submitted at least 5 working days before the meeting if you want an answer at the meeting. It should be understood that you **MUST** attend the relevant meeting to ask your questions in order for them to be tabled and responded to at the meeting (see item h below).
- f) Representations at committee meetings should relate to an item on the agenda and concern that committee. Questions from members of the public at a meeting of the Town Council may relate to any subject.
- g) The juncture for public representations at committee meetings is indicated on the agenda, however the chairman may ask that your presentation is made later in the meeting, to coincide with the agenda item to which it relates.
- h) It is important for transparency that representations intended to influence decisions are made publicly at the relevant meeting so, if you are unable to attend (or unwilling to speak at) a meeting you should ask a friend or a councillor or the Town Clerk to read out your representations at the meeting.

¹ While the Town Hall is being re-ordered, meetings are usually held in Highbury Hall (in Highbury Lane)

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- i) **You (or whoever reads out your representations) may speak for no longer than three minutes.**
- j) You should **speak very clearly into the microphone** as acoustics can be a problem, especially in the Assembly Room.
- k) Before speaking, you must give your **full name and the road/avenue/lane on which you live.**
- l) Although three minutes may seem like a long time, it can go very quickly when you are speaking on a subject about which you are passionate. It is a good idea to have your key points written down so that you can be sure you have covered everything.
- m) Public open session should not be used to raise complaints against individuals, (whether they be councillors or officers) or in respect of services provided by the town council. Such matters are covered by the town council's Complaints Policy which sets out how matters of this kind are handled.
- n) Answers to public questions may be given at a meeting of the Town Council if the procedure included in (e) above is followed. For committee meetings, it is at the discretion of the chairman to determine how and when responses will be provided.
- o) If you know the outcome you are looking for, be sure to make it plain to the Councillors, so that there can be no misunderstandings.
- p) In the event of any contentious subject, the chairman may allow **only one presentation for each side of the dispute.**
- q) At a meeting **you are not permitted to participate in the debate** which stems from your question or presentation, unless you are asked by the chairman to clarify any details.
- r) If the committee is to discuss matters of a confidential nature, it will be moved into closed session and members of public and the press will be asked to leave the room. The reason for moving into closed session will be given. You will be invited to return to the meeting chamber when the confidential business is complete.
- s) The minutes of the meeting will not disclose sensitive personal information, but the meeting is open to the public and the press, and will normally be live-streamed via audio. You should only disclose information which you are happy to be known by the public.
- t) The minutes of the meeting are not a verbatim record and will instead only give a summary of matters raised. Speeches may however be published in full along with the minutes if requested by the speaker. In this instance, copies must be provided to the Town Hall, no later than 3 working days after the meeting in question.

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If you have any questions or worries in relation to representations you want to make, please speak to an individual councillor or to the Town Clerk, who will do their best to help.