

## **Guide to Public Speaking at Council Meetings**

**To view agenda items for meetings, visit the Council website <http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>. This will give you the time, date and venue of the meeting. The agenda and reports are published 5 working days before the meeting. To register to speak, please email [democratic\\_services@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@bathnes.gov.uk).**

Giving local people a say in local decisions is an important part of our decision-making system. There are many ways you can contribute and get your voice heard at public meetings.

If you wish to speak, you are required to give **advance notice and provide the subject matter of your statement** to the Democratic Services Officer for that meeting, who is responsible for the organisation, clerking and smooth running of the meeting.

**The table below gives you general guidance on giving notice to speak at a meeting** (the relevant Constitutional rules are attached at Appendix 1).

For exact dates: <https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13585>

Meeting type	How much notice to make a 3 minute statement	How much notice to submit a question	How much notice to submit a petition
<b>Council</b> <b>Cabinet</b> <b>Policy, Development &amp; Scrutiny (PDS) Panels</b> <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Board</b> <b>Regulatory Committees</b>	<p><i>Statement</i> – about a Council service or about something the Council has or has not done, or about a matter of local interest or concern.</p> <p>Notice is required by no later than close of business <b>2 clear working days*</b> before the day of the meeting (i.e. on Monday for a Thursday meeting, on Wednesday for a Monday meeting and on Friday for a Wednesday meeting).</p>	<p><i>Question</i> - To ask up to three questions (with up to 2 sub-sections) of councillors at a meeting – your question must be set out in full by the deadline as stated above.</p> <p>The deadline for receipt of questions is close of business <b>4 clear working days*</b> before the day of the meeting.</p>	<p><i>Petition</i> – to present a petition about an issue which reflects the concerns of the local community.</p> <p>Notice is required by no later than close of business <b>2 clear working days*</b> before the day of the meeting.</p>
<p>Close of business is deemed to be 5pm on Monday – Thursday and 4.30pm on Friday</p>			
<b>Planning Committee</b> <b>Licensing Sub-Committee</b> <b>Parishes Liaison meeting</b>	<p>Please refer to Democratic Services regarding Planning Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee &amp; Parishes Liaison meeting as they have specific speaking schemes. contact Democratic Services <a href="mailto:democratic_services@bathnes.gov.uk">democratic_services@bathnes.gov.uk</a></p>		
<p><i>* If a meeting is postponed, or adjourned, once an agenda has been published, all deadlines for public engagement associated with the original meeting still apply.</i></p>			

There is an overall limit of one hour (which can be varied at the Chair's discretion) for submissions from the public to Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels, committees and boards.

**Statements;** - there will be no debate with you about what you say. However, providing you have no objection, Councillors may ask questions about your submission solely for clarification. Once you have spoken, you can leave the meeting at any time, but you are also free to wait and listen to the remainder of the meeting. The meeting will decide on the most appropriate course of action regarding your submission; however, please note there is no specific provision for a formal response to be given to the points you have made.

**Questions;** - the usual practice is that your question and the response will be circulated before the meeting, noted at the meeting and added to the meeting record, but they will not be read out at the meeting.

**Who can speak?** Anyone who is a resident in the area covered by the authority - Anyone who has a business operating in the area covered by the authority - Employees of the Council who wish to make submissions as private citizens (not related to issues connected with their employment).

**Support for the public and access for those with disabilities** - The prospect of speaking at a formal meeting may be daunting to some people. If you have any concerns or questions, do ask the Democratic Services officer for advice and support. Children or adults with a disability or difficulties with reading and writing can seek support of a Democratic Services Officer. If you have any particular needs to enable you to prepare a statement, access the meeting or speak, then please inform the Democratic Services officer so that they can make the appropriate arrangements.

Councillors and officers at the meeting will treat members of the public politely and with respect. Similarly, it is expected that the public will make any submissions courteously. Public meetings are held in buildings which have reasonable access and seating for the public. Microphones will normally be installed in meeting rooms. A hearing induction loop is available in Keynsham Civic Centre and in all meeting rooms at the Guildhall, Bath.

**Exceptions to Questions and the public speaking scheme** - Some matters fall outside the scope of the scheme. These are:

- Meetings which, because of their private content or reference to individual circumstances, have to be held in closed session e.g. taxi licences
- Other matters which are subject to established appeal procedures (e.g. complaints, school admission appeals)
- A statement or question which would breach the following rules;
  - it seeks to address exempt or confidential matters;
  - the subject matter is about an application for a legal consent or permission where there is an alternative process to challenge the decision or to appeal against it or where this Procedural Rule might prejudice the proper consideration of such an

- application or consent;
- it is about a matter which has already been lodged with the Council or with another statutory body as a formal complaint;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- it contains an allegation against, or comments about, the conduct of individual councillors or officers.

## Preparing a Written Statement

A written statement should:

- Explain the concern.
- Explain the context/background giving rise to the concern.
- Concentrate on what is relevant, central and key
- Avoid unnecessary detail and repetition.
- Outline the impact of the concern and the consequence of inaction
- Detail any action requested of the Council
- Outline the benefit of any action, if taken.

If helpful, a statement may use bullet points rather than setting out the full written text.

### **What we will do with your details**

In most cases, we will include your name and the content of your submission in the official minutes of the meeting, which are published online and kept on the Minute book for that meeting. We will also attach your statement to the electronic record (if provided), and to the Minute book.

For general enquiries about Democratic Services, please contact: [Democratic\\_services@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic_services@bathnes.gov.uk)  
01225 394435

**Extract from Constitution – Council rules for statements (3.1.23)**

Councillors and [members of the Public](#) have the right to put forward petitions and statements at a Council meeting. The submission must be relevant to the Council and/or the Bath & North East Somerset area. Advance notice of all statements (including those supporting a petition) must be submitted in writing (this to include transmission by e mail) stating the subject matter, and must be lodged with the Monitoring Officer no later than close of business 2 clear working days before the day of the meeting at which the submission is to be made (e.g. Monday 5pm for a meeting on a Thursday). Where possible, members of the public and Councillors are strongly encouraged to submit the text of their statement in advance to enable Members to read it before the meeting.

[Guidance](#) is available on drafting/submitting a statement.

There is no minimum number of signatures required for a petition.

A submission under this Rule will not be accepted if

- it seeks to address exempt or confidential matters;
- the subject matter is about an application for a legal consent or permission where there is an alternative process to challenge the decision or to appeal against it or where this Procedural Rule might prejudice the proper consideration of such an application or consent;
- it is about a matter which has already been lodged with the Council or with another statutory body as a formal complaint;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- it contains an allegation against, or comments about, the conduct of individual Councillors or officers.

There is a limit of one submission per item per individual member of the Public.

There is a limit of one hour for items from the Public, extended at the Chair's discretion.

Individual submissions will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes.

If the submission relates to a general matter not on the agenda for the meeting, it will be taken at the start of the meeting. If it relates to an item on the agenda for the meeting, the person making the submission will be invited to address the meeting either at the start of the meeting or immediately before the item is debated.

Once the submission has been made, the Chair will invite each Group Leader once, if they require any clarification on the submission, to ask factual questions of the person making the submission. The Group Leader can defer this right to another Member within the Group. The meeting will then determine what action it wishes to take on the matters contained in the submission.

### **Extract from Constitution – Cabinet rules for statements (3.2.20)**

Councillors and [members of the Public](#) have the right to put forward petitions and statements at a Cabinet meeting. The submission must be relevant to the Council and/or the Bath & North East Somerset area. Advance notice of all statements (including those supporting a petition) must be submitted in writing (this to include transmission by e mail) stating the subject matter and must be lodged with the Monitoring Officer no later than close of business 2 clear working days before the day of the meeting at which the submission is to be made (e.g. Monday 5pm for a meeting on a Thursday). Where possible, members of the public and Councillors are strongly encouraged to submit the text of their statement in advance to enable Members to read it before the meeting.

[Guidance](#) is available on drafting/submitting a statement.

There is no minimum number of signatures required for a petition.

A submission under this Rule will not be accepted if

- it seeks to address exempt or confidential matters;
- the subject matter is about an application for a legal consent or permission where there is an alternative process to challenge the decision or to appeal against it or where this Procedural Rule might prejudice the proper consideration of such an application or consent;
- it is about a matter which has already been lodged with the Council or with another statutory body as a formal complaint;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- it contains an allegation against, or comments about, the conduct of individual Councillors or officers.

There is a limit of one submission per item per individual member of the Public.

There is a limit of one hour for items from the Public, extended at the Chair's discretion.

Individual submissions will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes.

If the submission relates to a general matter not on the agenda for the meeting, it will be taken at the start of the meeting. If it relates to an item on the agenda for the meeting, the person making the submission will be invited to address the meeting either at the start of the meeting or immediately before the item is debated.

Once the submission has been made, the Chair will invite Cabinet Members, if they require any clarification on the submission, to ask factual questions of the person making the submission. The meeting will then determine what action it wishes to take on the matters contained in the submission.