



## **PUBLIC SPEAKING AT A COUNCIL MEETING**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council recognises that its residents can make an important contribution to its decision making process and be a valuable source of information.

This Guide provides information on what members of the public can expect when attending a Council meeting.





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## **1. What is Council?**

The Council is the principal forum for all 75 Elected Members to debate major policy issues of significance to the Council and the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **2. What is the make-up of Full Council?**

All 75 Councillors meet on a monthly basis as full council and hold an Annual General Meeting during May each year. The full council is responsible for:

- setting the budget
- approving the strategies and plans that make up the 'policy framework'
- approving the constitution
- appointing the Chief Executive and senior staff
- adopting a scheme of members allowances

## **3. Where and when does Full Council meet?**

Full Council meets once a month and details of the calendar of meetings can be found [here](#).

The meetings are undertaken on a hybrid basis. This means that participants can attend the Council chamber in person or join the meeting online (via Zoom). All hybrid meetings are live streamed to allow the public to watch the meeting as it happens.

A schedule of all the Full Council meetings for the current municipal year is available on the Council website and can be found [here](#).

## **4. How do I get my “voice” heard?**

Your “voice” at a Council meeting can be heard in two ways, by attending in person at the Council chamber or by joining the meeting virtually via the Council's supported online platform 'Zoom'. You will be provided with clear instructions on how to join the



meeting in either capacity following your request to speak (See section 13 'How do I register to speak?')

## **5. Who can speak?**

**Any resident of or Council taxpayer or non-domestic ratepayer in the County Borough** may ask questions of Members of the Executive or the Chairpersons of Committees, or any Member of the Council. At any one meeting no person may submit more than one question and no more than one such question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

Should a person aged under 16 years of age wish to address the Cabinet, arrangements will be made for them to be accompanied by an adult and the relevant GDPR documents will need to be completed.

## **6. How long do I have to speak?**

A period of up to **5 minutes** each shall be allowed for 6 questions to be put and answered at the meeting and for supplementary questions and answers thereto under these rules.

A questioner who has put a question in person may **also put one supplementary question without notice to the Councillor who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must relate to the answer given.**

Any question which is not dealt with during public question time will be dealt with by a written answer after the meeting.

The Presiding Member has the discretion to stop the speaker, if, in their view, the speaker is making any comments that are, or appear to be, defamatory, offensive or unrelated to the agenda item under discussion.

A questioner who has put a question in person may **also put one supplementary question without notice to the Councillor who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must relate to the answer given.** Any question which is not dealt with during public question time will be dealt with by a written answer after the meeting.

## **7 What kind of question can I ask at the meeting?**

The Presiding Member/Llywydd or Deputy Presiding Member/Dirprwy Llywydd may reject a question if it:

- (i) is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the area of the Authority;



- (ii) is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
  - (iii) is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past 12 months;
  - (iv) requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
  - (v) relates to an individual/group/business or the questioner's own particular circumstances;
  - (vi) relates to a matter which is the subject of legal and enforcement proceedings, or an appeal to a court of tribunal or to a Government Minister, or the National Assembly or an investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman;
  - (vii) relates to the personal circumstances or conduct of any officer and Councillor or conditions of service of employees;
  - (viii) relates to the activities and aims of a political party or organisation;
  - (ix) relates to a Regulatory Decision or a matter which may result in a Regulatory Decision; or
  - (x) is a statement and not a genuine enquiry.
- (xi) In addition the Presiding Member/Llywydd or Deputy Presiding Member/Dirprwy Llywydd may rule that a question shall not be answered if the cost of the preparation of the answer would in the opinion of the Director of Legal Services exceed the financial limits set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 as may be amended from time to time. The Ruling of the Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member/ Dirprwy Llywydd as to the rejection of a question shall be final.

## **8. Submitting your question to Council**

The Proper Officer will make a record of each question received and the date and time at which it was received, and a copy of the question will be open to the public inspection.

The Proper Officer will send a copy of the question to the Councillor to whom it is to be put. Rejected questions will be open for inspection with a record of the decision for the rejection which shall include the reasons for rejection. Copies of all questions to be asked at a particular meeting will be circulated to all Councillors and will be made available to the public attending the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting will record the details of the questions that have been asked (including any supplementary questions) and by whom, together with the answers given.



## **9. Attendance at the Meeting**

Members of the public who have registered to speak are asked to present themselves in person/online at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of the meeting and should make themselves known to the Democratic Services Officer.

For attendance at the Council chamber, the Democratic Services Officer will meet you and seat you accordingly. Each questioner will be required to identify himself/herself at the meeting when the question is called for answer by the Presiding Officer/Llywydd. When the questioner has identified himself/herself the question will be deemed to have been asked. If the questioner is absent or fails to identify himself/herself then the question will be answered in writing.

For attendance online, an officer from the Council will contact you via email or telephone to provide you with the necessary meeting log in details. The meeting ID and password must not be shared with anyone else. Only one person will be able to participate with these details and sharing these details may result in you being unable to join the meeting.

Please note that either option will mean you are consenting to your image and sound being included in the recording of the meeting for publication on the Council website.

(Please see below the link to the Council's Corporate Privacy Notice:-

Council's Corporate Privacy Notice – [How we use your personal information - An Overview | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/How-we-use-your-personal-information-An-Overview)

## **10. When will I speak during the Meeting?**

The Chair will go through the agenda in order, public speakers will be introduced by the Chair at the relevant time and encouraged to make their address.

## **11. Supporting documents or visual aids**

In order for Members to consider any points made by public speakers, they must provide any supporting information/documentation in advance and upon registering to speak. No additional information/documentation may be produced at the meeting itself.



## **12. Following My Address to Committee**

After you have finished addressing your question to the relevant Members of the Executive or the Chairpersons of Committees, or any Member of the Council, under the direction of the Chair they will respond to the address.

You are free to leave the meeting at the close of the agenda item.

A Minute of the Council meeting will be produced as a formal public record. This will include the names of the public speakers as being in attendance at the meeting.

## **13. How do I register to speak?**

The agendas for Full Council meetings are published on the Council's website, 5 clear days before the date of the meeting.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic email to the Proper Officer not later than **5.00pm at least eight clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the meeting**. Each question must give the **name and address of the questioner** and must **specify the Member to whom it is to be put**.

All those registered to speak will be advised prior to the meeting, either by email or through the contact telephone number that has been provided, if your request to speak has been accepted.

## **14. How do I register to speak in Welsh?**

We welcome any correspondence in Welsh and in accordance with the guidance (as shown in section 13 above), should you wish to address Members of the Committee in Welsh the same process applies, including stipulating whether the address is to be conducted in Welsh or English. Simultaneous translation facilities are available at the meeting should you wish to make your address through the medium of Welsh.

## **15. How do I register to speak if I have a disability or additional needs?**

If you have a disability or any additional needs and require assistance to participate in the Council process please contact us on the email address below by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Council meeting. A member of our team will be pleased to contact you to discuss your specific needs and facilitate your request to speak.



## **16. Written representations**

You may prefer to submit a written representation to be read at the meeting by the Chair. If this is the case, we welcome written submissions by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Council meeting.

Please submit written representations to:

Email: [CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk)

or to the following postal address:

Council Business Unit  
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,  
2 Llys Cadwyn,  
Taf Street,  
Pontypridd. CF37 4<sup>TH</sup>

## **17. Additional Information**

Filming and recording of meetings is not permitted by members of the public and we also politely request that the joining details for the meetings are not shared.

Speakers should advise Democratic Services in advance if they have any special needs or requirements.

If you have any questions concerning public speaking at a meeting then please do not hesitate to contact one of our team on the email address as shown below:

Council Business [CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk)