

GRIMLEY PARISH COUNCIL - WORCESTERSHIRE

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

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Adopted by Grimley Parish Council: May 2018

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Important introductory notes

a. **Meetings of the Parish Council** (held monthly at Grimley Parish) are not public meetings. However members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the parish council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chair authorises them to do so. There is no legal requirement to provide a Public Open Forum.

b. **Residents of the Parish** – It is the policy of this parish council that residents of the parish may address the Parish Council during Public Open Forum. Those wishing to speak may be asked to confirm their postcode for this reason. Children of residents of the parish are encouraged to attending parish council meetings, participate via email/social media in advance of meetings or also address the parish council during Public Open Forum. It is not a requirement to be registered to vote in the parish in order to speak during Public Open Forum at a normal monthly Parish Council Meeting. (NB. It is only a requirement to be registered to vote in the parish in order to take part in debate and polls specifically at Parish Meetings or Annual Parish Meetings).

c. **Wider Members of the Public** – It is the policy of this parish council that wider members of the public (residents from outside the parish boundary) are welcome to attend Parish Council Meetings as observers, but may only address the Parish Council during Public Open Forum at the discretion of the Chair. Those wishing to speak may be asked to confirm their postcode for this reason.

d. **Public Open Forum** is known by other councils as ‘question time’ or ‘public participation’.

e. There is no legal requirement to provide a Public Open Forum. As part of its community engagement, Parish Council’s can set out an agreed time when members of the public are invited to speak. The Public Open Forum is designed to give residents of the parish (or wider members of the public at the discretion of the Chair) the opportunity to (a) make representations to the Council through the Chair, (b) ask/answer questions, (c) give evidence relating to the business to be transacted.

f. As a matter of best practice the Public Open Forum is kept separate from the debate of the councillors. At Grimley Parish Council this opportunity takes place before the formal meeting of the Council. Some Councils hold this section at the end of their meetings.

g. Strictly at the discretion of the Chair and as a courtesy or to obtain information aiding debate, any person from any address can be invited to address the parish council at any point of the meeting. Standing Orders may be suspended in order to allow this to occur.

Further information

1. During Public Open Forum, Cllrs are not required to immediately respond to questions put by residents of the parish (or by wider members of the public at the discretion of the Chair). If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for a future meeting at the discretion of the Council.
2. If the issue is on the agenda then it will be discussed under the appropriate item. Members of the public may therefore be requested to leave their contact details with the Clerk before leaving the Council meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query. This information will be treated in line with General Data Protection Requirements. Please see the parish council document "Data Protection Policy & Information Security Policy" for further information.
3. There is no requirement for minutes to be taken of the Public Open Forum, however, as best practice a brief record of topics will be included in the minutes of that meeting. But libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted.
4. Written questions received in advance of the meeting are encouraged but not essential: if provided in advance this will make it easier for an answer to be prepared. Persons not wishing for their name to be included in the minutes of the meeting must approach the Clerk in advance of the meeting.
5. All persons present will act respectfully towards every other person present and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates him or her. All statements, questions and responses, challenges to statements, complaints or criticisms must be made politely.
6. Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council. The Council will not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda.
7. The time allocated to the whole period of the open forum is 30 minutes but it may be limited or extended at the discretion of the Chair or by vote of the Parish Councillors.
8. If more than one member of the public wishes to speak on the same topic then they should nominate one person to speak on their behalf. This will avoid duplication and make the best use of the public participation period.
9. Whether attendance is part of a deputation or as an individual, the spokesperson will be invited to put the case with a maximum time limit of 3 minutes. Follow up speakers will be allowed 5 minutes in total.

In cases of urgency:

10. The Chair will decide whether he can advise the deputation immediately or if he needs to sound out members and/or consult the Clerk. The Chair will then inform the deputation what action the Parish Council intends to take.
11. The initial response by the Council will be to establish if the matter is something which the Council should be involved in as a matter of public interest or is a private matter for the electors to deal with themselves.

12. The Parish Council may decide the best method to deal with the problem nb –
- (i) The degree to which the Council can act as advocate on behalf of individuals/electors.
 - (ii) To refer the matter to a Committee of the Council for action.
 - (iii) To place the matter on a future Parish Council agenda.
 - (iv) To instruct the Clerk to make further enquiries or conduct correspondence on behalf of the deputation or arrange meetings as considered necessary.
 - (v) If the matter is already on the Council agenda the Chairman will invite electors to make any points they feel are relevant with regard to the agenda item. The deputation can then remain and listen to the debate in Council
 - (vi) If, during the formal meeting, the Chairman feels that the deputation has information which will be useful to the Council, the Chairman with the agreement of members can invite a spokesperson to address the Council.

After Open Forum:

13. Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Council meeting after the public session as observers, but will not be able to join in the discussion unless invited to do so by the Chairman.
14. Members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues).
15. Please note that offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude a disorderly person
16. Please refer to the Policy on the Filming, Photographing, Audio Recording & Social Media Reporting of Public Parish Council and Committee Meetings. Contained within Standing Orders.

Parish Clerk, Proper Officer & Responsible Financial Officer Mrs Lisa Stevens, CiLCA
c/o 9 The Limes, Kempsey, Worcester, WR5 3LG
Tel: 07950256363 / 01905 820956 Email: parishclerk@grimley-pc.gov.uk
Website: <https://grimley-pc.gov.uk> Social Media: 'Grimley Parish Cllrs Worcs'

Requests for this information in other languages/audio/large print will be reasonably considered.



Scan with your phone to go to our new parish council website



Our parish council logo shows the miniature 'gorse type' plant Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*). Found on our local SSSI Monkwood Green Common, it is a plant of acidic heaths and moors which has undergone serious decline over the past century.