

FURTHER INFORMATION

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**EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

**You have the right to ask
questions at, or make
statements to, meetings of
the Council or its
Committees.**

**This leaflet tells you how the Council's
scheme operates.**

The District Council is committed to extending the public involvement in its decision-making processes. There are already schemes in place where members of the public can speak at Planning Committee or Licensing Committee meetings, and separate leaflets are available for these.

This leaflet explains how members of the public can participate at the Council's other meetings. It tries to answer some of the questions you may have about the procedures and what to expect at the meetings. It is based on simple rules to make the system as fair and easy to operate as possible.

How can I participate?

The full Council of all 39 Councillors and its Committees have responsibility for a whole range of issues affecting the local community. Each Committee has its own area of expertise and any question will need to be targeted at the right Committee.

Questions are asked, or statements made, at the beginning of meetings before the official business of the Committee begins. If the question relates to an agenda item an answer may be considered with that item and answered during the debate.

Questions can relate to any issue the Council or a particular Committee deals with.

You have the right to stay during the meeting and listen to the debate on the relevant item, except where the public is excluded from the meeting. The public can only be excluded from a meeting where Exempt or Confidential matters are to be discussed, for reasons set down in legislation.

Once the question has been asked you are not allowed to join in the debate, so questions should be brief and to the point.

I've got a question, or would like to make a statement, so what do I do?

Come along to the appropriate meeting. Write your question or statement on one of the pads provided, before the meeting starts, and put it in the Question Box.

You can also put your question or statement in writing beforehand and send, fax or email it to Democratic Services at the address on this leaflet. This will then be put in the Question Box by the Democratic Services Officer looking after the meeting.

A question on any topic may be asked **as long as there is no suspicion that the question is improper** (e.g. offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosure of Exempt or Confidential information).

Do not forget to provide your name and address, so that written replies can be sent to you if your question or statement is not answered at the meeting or if you are unable to attend.

The Chairman of the meeting will check the Question Box once the meeting has started. If there are a number of questions in the box they will be selected randomly, one at a time. The Chairman will invite the questioner, if present, to read out their question or statement. If the questioner is not present the Chairman will read out the question.

An answer will be given straight away, if at all possible. In some circumstances further information may be needed to answer the question fully. In such cases a written response will be given which will be sent later to the questioner.

Please note that only 15 minutes is allowed for questions and answers, or statements, so if there are a large number of questions some may not get answered during the meeting. Written answers will be sent later in this case.

Questions or statements cannot be made at Planning or Licensing Committee meetings, which have different public participation schemes.