Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council

Document Reference – BCSPC POL 24

Version	Release Date	Distribution	Notes	Reviewed Date	Date Re-Adopted
BCSPC 24 Public Participation Policy	03/2026	All Councillors		20/10/2026	20/10/2026

Document Sign Off & Adoption

This document was distributed to Councillors prior to the 20th of October 2026 Parish Council Meeting. The Policy was discussed at the meeting. No revisions were required and the Policy was formally adopted (Ref: 11b of the minutes of that meeting).

Adoption Witnessed by the Clerk to Brightwell Cum Sotwell Parish Council

Name: _____Nettie Gray_____

Signature: _____Nettie Gray _____

Date: _____

Public Participation Policy

The Council will set aside a period at the commencement of each meeting when members of the public can ask questions or make statements. Members of the public will not be permitted to speak at any other time during the meeting.

The following rules shall apply:

1. This scheme applies to meetings of the Council, its committees, and sub-committees and there will be a Public Participation Session at the start of every meeting to which this policy applies.

2. Members of the public, including councillors, may ask questions or make a statement on any item included on the agenda. The session will last for a period of up to 10 minutes but is capable of being extended at the Chair's discretion.
3. A councillor must not speak on any item on which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, including during any period of public participation.
4. Questions from the parish's residents will take priority, followed by property owners, businesses and then non-residents.
5. All speeches shall last for no more than 5 minutes, but capable of being extended at the Chair's discretion.
6. A person shall stand when requesting to speak and when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chair of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
7. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chair of the meeting.
8. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking. The Chair of the meeting will have complete discretion as to the order in which questions are taken and statements made. Supplementary questions may be asked at the Chair's discretion.
9. If several people wish to speak on the same topic, a spokesperson should be appointed to address the council on behalf of the group. Other members of the group may speak to give additional points, but must not repeat the same information. A group of speakers with an opposing view will be given the same opportunities to speak.
10. If an answer to a question cannot be given at the meeting the Chair may, at their discretion, arrange for a written answer to be given.
11. The council is unable to make decisions on items raised in the public participation session. Any new items will be passed to the Clerk for possible inclusion on a future agenda.
12. The Chair of the meeting may rule that any public remarks are not appropriate and will not be accepted; for example, if they are defamatory, frivolous or offensive. In such an instance the Chair may disallow a question or statement or cut short a statement or discussion, or disqualify any member of the public from continuing to speak.
13. Questions which require the disclosure of exempt or confidential information will not be answered.
14. If there are no statements or questions, or if all statements have been made or questions asked before the period of time allotted, the meeting will start to consider the remainder of its business. No further public questions or statements will be entertained at that meeting.
15. No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this is ignored, the chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

16. If person(s) disregard the request of the chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
17. If the person ignores this resolution, the chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.
18. The Chair of the meeting's interpretation of this procedure shall not be questioned and their ruling on any questions relating to this procedure shall be final.

REVIEW PERIOD

To be reviewed every TWO years unless there are any specific changes in between.

Date Agreed:20/10/2026

Review Date: October 2028

Public Participation at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Meetings

A guide for residents and visitors

When can you speak?

There is a Public Participation Session at the beginning of each meeting. This is the only time when members of the public may speak, unless the Chair invites you to do so later.

What can you speak about?

[Issues that affect the parish] OR [Items listed on the meeting agenda]

How long does it last?

The public session normally lasts up to (20) minutes. The Chair may extend the time if needed. Each speaker has up to (3) minutes. The Chair may allow more time if appropriate.

Who speaks first?

Residents of the parish; local property owners or businesses; non-residents. The Chair decides the order of speakers. If several people want to talk on the same topic, a spokesperson should be appointed. Other people may speak to make additional points but not repeat the same information.

How to ask to speak

[Raise your hand] OR [Stand] to indicate that you wish to speak. Wait until the Chair invites you. Stand when speaking if you are able (unless this would cause discomfort). Address your comments or questions to the Chair.

Answers to questions

Councillors may answer questions during the meeting. If an answer is not available immediately, a written reply may be provided later. Questions involving confidential information cannot be answered. Decisions will not be made during the public participation session and may be considered at a future meeting if not already on the agenda.

Respectful behaviour

Please keep comments and questions relevant and respectful. The Chair may stop statements that are offensive, defamatory, or disruptive. If poor behaviour continues, you may be asked to leave the meeting.

After the public session

Once the public participation session ends, the Council will move on to the rest of the agenda. Further public questions or statements are not normally taken during the meeting.

Guidance Notes

- An order that includes brackets like this '( )' requires information to be inserted by the council.
- An order that includes brackets like this '[ ]' and the term 'OR' provides alternative options for a council to choose from.
- These have been highlighted in blue text.
- Ensure that these are consistent with your council's standing orders (see 3e, 3f, 3g, and 3i in the 2025 NALC model standing orders) and within the policy and guide for residents.
- Update the review period in line with your council policy.
- Personalise the policy and guide with your council's name and branding.