



THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

A Guide for the public attending and speaking at meetings

The Council hopes that this short guide will encourage members of the public to attend and participate at its meetings and will also be helpful to those who are unfamiliar with procedures at Council meetings.

Why are meetings held?

The full council meets at least ten times a year. Meetings are the Council's principal means by which they discuss and agree things relating to parish matters, and also formulate policies relating to their governance. (Note that often decision making may be delegated to the Clerk or a committee.) We also hold committee and sub-committee meetings which are open to the public. Advisory Committees are not open to the public.

When are meetings held?

Meetings of the Town Council and its committees are held at Kings House in the Council Chamber on the first floor normally on the last Tuesday of every month except August and December commencing at 7.00pm. A timetable of meetings can be found on the Council's web site and also on our noticeboards. You also find on our website and noticeboards a copy of our agendas and our minutes. When you come along to our meetings there will be a copy of the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting and copies of other agenda papers available for you.

Who can attend meetings?

Anyone. However, if the Council needs to consider certain matters in private (employment matters, negotiating contracts or pursuing/defending a legal action) then councillors may vote to exclude the press and the public for that particular item. You will be advised the reason for excluding press and public from that part of the meeting. If this is the case, then this item will generally be held at the end of the meeting.

Why should you attend?

- ✓ You may have a matter you wish to discuss or bring to the attention of the Council
- ✓ You may want to become better informed about topical issues
- ✓ You may want to observe councillors' participation at meetings

Please keep your question as brief as possible

When can I speak?

There is an early item on the agenda of every full council meeting for public participation. When this item is reached, the Chairman invites questions from the public.

The Chairman and the Clerk will endeavour to address the issue you have raised but please be aware that the Council may make decisions only if the matter has been included on the agenda. You may be advised that the Council requires more time in order to investigate your concern before you receive a full response. Please give your name before you start speaking. When you want to speak please raise your arm so that the Chairman can see that you want to speak. It is the Chairman who determines who shall speak, in which order and for how long. Note that there are other opportunities to raise concerns with the Council including contacting Councillors directly or contacting the Clerk.

What happens when more than one person wants to speak?

If there is more than one speaker on the same subject it would be useful to get together to choose a spokesperson. Only 5 minutes is allowed on any one subject. If there is more than one subject being discussed then the Chairman will ask the person speaking to stop once the allotted time has expired.

What happens at meetings?

If you have a hearing or visual impairment, please advise the Clerk as we set aside seats to help you as a visitor. Council meetings are quite formal and councillors address each other as Councillor. They also must address the Chairman when discussing matters. The order of business at every meeting will be as set out on that meeting's agenda and we ask that everyone attending respects the office of the Chairman who is responsible for the conduct of the meeting and for ensuring that the agenda as detailed is followed. It is the Clerk's role to support the Chairman including ensuring that decisions taken are informed procedurally correct and lawful.

Still unsure about attending?

The Council appreciates that some people may find the prospect of attending a meeting for the first time a little intimidating. If you have any concerns at all about attending a meeting, please do contact the Clerk for help and guidance. The Clerk will make herself known to visitors before the meeting starts, and it is useful then for you to advise the Clerk that you wish to speak on a certain item.

Openness at our meetings

In the interests of openness and transparency, councillors and members of the public are reminded that the law permits any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of a meeting of the Council or its committees when they are open to the public. This does not extend to live verbal commentary. Filming and photography will

only be permitted from the area designated. No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent. Anyone wishing to report on the meeting should notify the Clerk or Chairman so that they can be afforded reasonable facilities. People under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the Clerk or Chairman and should sit in the area designated for this purpose. **Improper conduct or any disruptive behavior could result in expulsion from the meeting.**

The Council agenda

The agenda of the Council meeting and the order in which those items on the agenda appear are laid down in law or are detailed within our standing orders. The first item on the Annual Town Council meeting agenda (which is held in May) is the election of Mayor (Chairman). At all other meetings the agenda follows the following order:

- Welcome by the Chairman (note that if the Chairman is not in attendance then the Vice Chairman will take the meeting. If neither is able to attend then the other councillors elect a chairman for that meeting.)
- Public question time
- Receive and accept apologies from councillors
- Declaration of interests and requests for dispensations
- To agree the minutes of the meeting held previously
- To receive recommendations from committees
- To receive reports from the District and County Councillors and the police if present
- To discuss and agree any items (the details of those items are given on the agenda)
- To discuss and take action on any items of urgent business notified by the clerk
- To note the date of the next meetings

Please visit our website for full details on our meetings, minutes, our activities, procedures and policies. The website also has details of services available to our community.

You can also follow us on [@thetfordcouncil](#)

We also publish a newsletter which can be subscribed to via our website.

Thetford Town Council welcomes your involvement with the community.

How to contact us

The Clerk can be contacted at:

Tel 01842 754247

Email mail@thetfordtowncouncil.gov.uk

Website www.thetfordtowncouncil.gov.uk