

## Public participation

We encourage members of the public to participate in our affairs. All relevant issues raised by members of the public will be taken into account when the Council is making its decisions.

## Taking part in Executive meetings

Executive meetings are open to the public and there is a standing item on Executive agendas for public participation.

Members of the public may ask a question at a meeting of Executive for up to three minutes on any agenda item or on any issue that affects the district or its people.

Members of the public wishing to speak at an Executive meeting must notify [democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk), including their name and the agenda item or topic they wish to speak on, by 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before).

If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question.

The relevant Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

## Taking part in Council and Committee meetings

These meetings are all open to the public and most have time set aside for submissions to be read out. Direct questions are not allowed, but you may read a statement or express an opinion.

Anyone who lives in the district or who pays Council Tax or business rates is eligible to take part. You will need to send us a written submission of no more than 750 words. For committee meetings we must receive your written submission by 10am on the working day before the meeting. For Council meetings we must receive your written submission by noon on the seventh working day before the meeting. You must contact us to request to take part and let us know what you want to comment on by:

- calling Customer Services on 01993 861000
- emailing [democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk)

## What your submission can be about

At committee meetings your submission must relate to points on the meeting agenda. At full council meetings other issues can be raised which are relevant to the district. You can find out which committee has responsibility for the issue you want to raise by looking at the

agendas and reports for the meetings. These are available five working days before each meeting. Some matters may be excluded, contact us for advice or more information.

### What happens during the meeting

The time limit for one submission is five minutes. If several people want to contribute on the same subject they are restricted to a total of five minutes. The time for all submissions at one meeting is 30 minutes. You will be invited to read out your statement, or if you are unable to attend the meeting in person, your submissions will be read to the meeting by a member of staff. You will not be asked questions on your submission. Contact us for advice if you are unsure.

These **temporary** processes aim to strike a balance between the need to conduct business, technological and other risks, and being able to hear the views of the public. We will keep this process under review.

### Taking part in planning **meetings committees**

When planning applications are heard by the **Development Control Committee or a Planning Sub-Committee**, there is an opportunity for applicants, members of the public and other interested parties to put forward views for or against the application. The information that they provide is considered to be very useful in helping the **Committee or Sub-Committee** to reach a sound planning decision.

You can request to attend the meeting and address the **Committee or Sub-Committee** in person. Three minutes is allocated for each of the following groups to address the committee:

- Those objecting to the application
- The relevant parish or town council
- Those supporting the application, including the applicant
- **The ward member(s)**

The time limit will be strictly applied. This means that the total time allocated for all representations on any application is **nine twelve** minutes. We ask that you forward a copy of your submission to us prior to the meeting, just in case there are any difficulties on the day and you are unable to attend the meeting.

Planning applications for which a speaker or speakers have been registered will, whenever possible, be heard first. This may involve some re-ordering of the applications compared to how they appear on the committee agenda.

Please contact us by 12 noon the Friday before the meeting to request to take part by emailing [democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk) or by calling Customer Services on 01993 861000.

## What you can comment on

Submissions will be allowed on any application on the schedule of planning applications to be considered by the **Development Control Committee** or Planning Sub-Committees. For example, applications for planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent, advertisement consent and applications to fell trees the subject of Tree Preservation Orders. It will also be allowed those types of application included on the agenda for determination at the meeting, or where confirmation of a previous decision is being sought. Submissions will not be allowed on items within the Agenda, such as potential enforcement action cases where there is no associated retrospective planning application or Lawful Development Certificates which are legal determinations based on the facts.

Planning meetings are held in public and no submissions of a personal, slanderous, defamatory, or otherwise offensive or abusive nature should be made.

A maximum of three minutes per submission will be allowed. The time must be strictly adhered to. **The Chair may, in exceptional circumstances, use their discretion to extend the time allocated for representations.**

## Conflict of interests

Submissions must be seen to be truly independent and not have a direct interest in the application or be related to, or a business associate of the applicant. Town and Parish Councillors are reminded of their responsibilities under the agreed Code of Conduct. We will not be aware of any interests or conflicts which town or parish councillors have. So the responsibility for complying with this rests with the council and councillor concerned.