

# BLACKTOFT PARISH COUNCIL

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – for information**

**Meetings of the parish council are not public meetings but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the council as observers.**

**They have no legal right to speak unless the parish council Chairman authorises them to do so. However, as part of its community engagement, Blacktoft Parish Council sets out a time for public participation at all parish council meetings.**

**Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making process of the parish council. The parish council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda. As a matter of best practice the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the councillors.**

**If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for the next appropriate parish council meeting at the discretion of the parish council.**

**Members of the public are welcome to stay for the parish 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.**

**Members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (i.e. staffing matters, etc).**

### **RULES**

- **The public participation session will be limited to a maximum time of 15 minutes**
- **The time for each member of the public to speak is limited to 3 minutes**
- **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.**
- **Written statements must be received by the Clerk at least 3 days before the meeting**
- **Any member of the parish council, who has declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on an item to be discussed, will be allowed the same rights and time as a member of the public for this session. This member will be required to leave the room before the parish council considers the matter in which they have declared a disclosable interest.**
- **Public participation is an opportunity for members of the public to make representation, answer questions or give evidence relating to business to be transacted**
- **The Chairman has the right to say that any question or statement is inappropriate and will not be accepted**
- **Neither the councillors nor the Clerk should be put under pressure to respond immediately to comments made under public participation. Members of the public**

do not have a right to force items onto the council agenda nor to insist on how matters are recorded in the minutes

- A question raised by a member of the public during a public participation session shall not require a response and there should be no debate or discussion between the parish council and the public
- A brief record of topics raised during public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. All libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted but will be taken seriously and dealt with
- If the issue is on the agenda then it will be discussed under the appropriate item. Members of the public are, therefore, requested to leave their contact details with the Clerk before leaving the meeting if they wish to receive a reply to their query.

**Note: Blacktoft parish council standing orders – Section 10**

#### **Disorderly Conduct**

- a. no person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly
- b. if, in the opinion of the Chairman, there has been a breach of standing order 10(a) above, the Chairman shall express that opinion and thereafter any councillor (including the Chairman) may move that the person be silenced or excluded from the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forth with and without discussion
- c. if a resolution made in accordance with standing order 10(b) above, is disobeyed, the Chairman may take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce it and/or he may adjourn the meeting

\* please note this applies to members of the parish council and members of the public.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE – for information**

For the foreseeable future all correspondence directed at the parish council by members of the Blacktoft Parish community will only be accepted in writing, signed and dated via the postal service to the Clerk to be received 3 clear working days before the date of the next parish council meeting. All other methods of correspondence and communication, including via the website, will be handled accordingly.