

Public Speaking at Planning Committee

Revised Guidance issued in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

21 April 2020

The Council is responsible for determining applications for planning permission. The majority of planning applications are dealt with under delegated powers by Officers and are not considered by the Planning Committee. However, major, complex and contentious proposals will be determined by elected Councillors at Planning Committee meetings. Public speaking applies only to applications which are heard at a public meeting of the Planning Committee.

Public speaking at Planning Committee meetings is not a legal requirement. The purpose of this scheme is to give the public, Parish Councils and applicants an opportunity to make their views known in person to the Planning Committee. Letters of support or objection will also continue to be taken into account.

Due to the impact of government regulations about public gatherings and social distancing rules, some changes have been made to the way Planning Committee meets and, therefore, how speakers can take part in meetings. The key changes are set out below.

- Planning Committee meetings will be held remotely. It is possible that meetings will be held more frequently than normal and may also take place in the day time.
- An audio stream of the meeting will be broadcast to the Council's YouTube Channel (a link can be found on the relevant agenda page at www.telford.gov.uk/meetings).
- If you wish to speak at the meeting you **must** register in advance in accordance with the procedure set out below.
- Speakers will be 'dialled in' to take part in the meeting and therefore must have a stable telephone connection.

Can I speak on any planning application?

Only on those which are due to be determined by the Planning Committee.

How will I know when a particular application will be heard at Planning Committee?

Development Management will be able to advise whether an application is likely to be considered by the Committee and when. Registrations for public speaking are not accepted until the relevant Planning Committee agenda has been published. We aim to continue to publish agendas five clear working days before the date of the meeting but this will not always be possible during the pandemic. You can subscribe at www.telford.gov.uk/meetings to receive an email alert when agendas are published.

Who can speak at Planning Committee Meetings?

- The person applying for planning permission (or his or her agent or other representative) is entitled to speak in support of their application.
- Any other member of the public (or his or her agent or other representative) is entitled to speak either in favour or against the application.*
- A representative of a Parish or Town Council is entitled to speak either in favour or against the application, providing that the property is situated within that Parish or Town Council area, or in certain circumstances when the property is in an adjoining Parish or Town Council area.
- Borough Ward Councillors, providing that the property is located within their ward, or in certain circumstances when the property is located in an adjoining Borough ward. A Borough Councillor may also speak as a 'stand in' for the Ward Councillor.

An applicant in favour of the application can speak even though an objector does not and vice-versa.

* What if more than one person wishes to speak in each category?

In the event of more than one objector or one applicant/supporter wishing to speak either:

- Prior to the meeting, a spokesperson may be appointed on behalf of all those wishing to speak in the same category. This should normally be the first person who registered to speak but if an alternative is subsequently agreed, details must be provided to the Democratic Services Team before the day of the meeting. If the objectors or applicant/supporters cannot reach agreement about who will speak, then the person who registered first will be given the opportunity to speak.
- In some cases, for example when there are just two objectors wishing to speak, individuals may agree to share the allocated time.

Names and contact details of all those who register to speak will be publicly available from Democratic Services.

In the case of multi member Borough Wards, the Chairman may, at his discretion, allow more than one Borough Ward Member to speak.

How long is allowed for speaking?

A maximum of three (3) minutes is allocated to each of the following categories of speaker:

- The authorised Parish or Town Council Representative for the area
- The Borough Ward Councillor
- Those wishing to speak in favour of the application
- Those wishing to speak opposing the application

These time limits will be strictly adhered to. In certain circumstances the Chairman may agree to extend these time limits in the interests of a balanced debate. Speakers will not be allowed to complete presentations if the allocated time limit expires.

What is the Procedure for speaking?

The Chairman will announce the application and request speakers to be dialled into the meeting. Speakers will be invited to address the Committee in the following order:

1. Parish/Town Council representative
2. Borough Ward Councillor
3. Objector (or agent/spokesperson on behalf of objectors)
4. Applicant or their agent/spokesperson

The Chairman will have the discretion to halt the Speaker should they begin to stray from the discussion on planning grounds or make inappropriate or offensive comments. In these circumstances, the Chairman will ask that the Speaker is placed on Mute or removed from the meeting.

Speakers may read from prepared statements.

Once speakers have finished their address, they will be placed on Mute unless they indicate an intention to 'hang up' and listen to audio stream. Speakers must not over-ride the Mute and may take no further part in the meeting although they may remain on the line to hear the debate and decision if they do not have access the audio stream.

Following this, a Planning Officer will present the written report and respond to any questions raised by members of the Planning Committee before the Committee debates and makes a decision on the application.

How do I arrange to speak at the Planning Committee?

Borough Councillors, objectors, applicants/supporters must register to speak as below. Parish or Town Council representatives will be entitled to speak subject to the Clerk of their Council notifying Democratic Services in writing or by email of the nominated speaker(s) and the application(s) they will be speaking on in accordance with the process below.

Please contact the Democratic Services team by **no later than 5pm, two working days before the meeting** using one of the following methods:

 <https://webforms.telford.gov.uk/form/262>

 **01952 383205**

 **Democratic Services
Telford & Wrekin Council
Addenbrooke House
Ironmasters Way
Telford
TF3 4NT**

As part of the registration process, individuals should disclose whether they wish to speak for or against an application and in which category. In addition, telephone contact details **must** be provided so that the individual can be dialed-in to speak at the meeting.

Names and contact details of all those who register to speak will be publicly available from Democratic Services.

It is recommended that Speakers listen to the audio stream if possible so that they can anticipate the telephone call dialing them in to the meeting.

For those unable to listen to the audio stream, Democratic Services may be able to provide an estimate of the time speakers will be dialed in, but this is a best guess and should not be relied upon.

Once the decision has been made, Speakers will be removed from the meeting (although they may observe via the audio stream of the meeting being broadcast to the Council's YouTube Channel).

What can I say?

Comments must be based on planning issues, for example: overlooking/loss of privacy, loss of light, adequacy of parking, highway safety and/or traffic generation, noise or disturbance resulting from use, layout and density, design, character and appearance, conservation, sustainability and planning policy. Issues such as boundary or property disputes, land ownership, restrictive covenants, property values, commercial competition and the developer's character or motives are not material planning considerations.

Speakers must not:

- Make statements of a personal or slanderous nature; or
- Be abusive; or
- Interrupt other Speakers or the debate of the Planning Committee.
- Over-ride Mute status

Can I provide additional information to present at the meeting?

Additional material, such as plans or photographs must be emailed to the Democratic Services Team at least 48 hours before the meeting.

What happens if an application is deferred?

If the Planning Committee Members decide to defer the application (either before or after hearing the speakers) there will be a further public speaking session at the meeting to which the application is brought back for consideration but the registration requirements will still apply and the onus is on speakers to re-register.

What happens if an application is withdrawn prior to being heard?

Applications are seldom withdrawn, however, if the application is withdrawn before being presented at the meeting, those who have already expressed a wish to speak will be notified before the meeting, providing that sufficient time has been given for Officers to notify those involved of the withdrawal.

Where can I get further information or advice?

Public Speaking & Meeting Procedure Queries:
Democratic Services

☎ 01952 383205 ✉ publicspeaking@telford.gov.uk

Planning Application Queries:
Development Management

☎ 01952 380380 ✉ planning.control@telford.gov.uk