

Part A

Report to: Constitution Working Party
Date of meeting: 22 September 2016
Report of: Democratic Services Manager
Title: Members of the public speaking at meetings

1.0 **Summary**

1.1 Members of the public are able to come and speak at committee meetings. This report is to consider whether the constitution should be changed to state that for Standing Committees, including Cabinet, the speakers should be Watford Borough residents.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 For the Constitution Working Party to consider whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Council regarding public speaking at meetings.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Caroline Harris
telephone extension: 8372 email: caroline.harris@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Carol Chen

3.0 Detailed Proposal

3.1 Currently with regards to the public speaking at meetings (not including Licensing and Development Management or scrutiny Committees) the constitution states the following in the Standing Committees procedure rules:

“10.0 Procedure in relation to the public being permitted to speak at committees

10.1 The Council has adopted the following Procedure to allow public speaking at committees, with the exception of Development Management and Licensing Committees which are dealt with in the Procedure Rules below and any items appearing in Part B of a committee agenda.

10.2 Only 1 person will be permitted to speak on any one item on the agenda. In order to speak a person must register their intention to do so by 12:00 noon of the day of the meeting with the Democratic Services team. Entitlement to speak will be strictly on a first come first served basis.”

3.2 Members may wish to consider adding to the wording at 10.1 to state that:
“The Council has adopted the following Procedure **for members of the public who are residents of the Borough to speak** [~~to allow public speaking~~] at committees...”
This would be to ensure that residents of the borough have the opportunity to speak at meetings if they wish and would be given priority as there can only be 1 speaker. As the rules currently stand a non-resident could register first to speak ahead of a resident.

3.3 Members may wish to add a caveat that if a non-resident wished to speak who could demonstrate that they had a valid interest in the item under discussion then it would be considered at the Chair’s discretion whether they could speak.

3.4 This would not apply to the regulatory committees (Development Management and the Licensing committees) as developers may be from outside the borough and also representatives of licensed premises may also be non-residents. These committees have their own protocol within the constitution.

3.5 Scrutiny committees also have their own procedure rules with regards to speaking at meetings.

4.0 Implications

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 None

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that it is for council to determine whether it wishes to permit members of the public to speak at meetings, other than licensing sub committees where regulations govern how hearings are conducted.

Appendices

No appendices

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report

WBC Constitution

File Reference

None