# A Guide to Attending Meetings

**A guide for the public attending and speaking at our 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?**
There is a statutory obligation for the Council to meet at least four times a year. Our Council meets six times a year. Meetings are the Council's principal means by which it discusses and agrees things relating to parish matters and also formulates policies relating to their governance. (Note that occasionally decision making may be delegated to the Clerk e.g. in the event on an emergency).

**When are meetings held?**
Meetings of the Parish Council are held in Fleggburgh Village Hall. We meet every other month, and meeting dates and times are published on this website. You can also find on the website copies of our agendas and minutes. On the noticeboard outside Fleggburgh Village Hall you will find a copy of the agenda of the next meeting posted at least 3 clear days in advance of the meeting.

**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 of 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

**When can I speak?**
There is an early item on the agenda of every Council meeting for public participation. When this item is reached the Chair invites questions from the public. The Chair 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. When you want to speak please raise your hand so that the Chair can see that you want to speak. It is the Chair 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. Once the period of public participation is over, members of the public may not speak during the remainder of the meeting.

**What happens at meetings?**
If you have a hearing or visual impairment please advise the Clerk as we have seats set aside. Council meetings are relatively informal and councillors will address each other by their first name.

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 Chair 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 Chair 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.

**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. Anyone who does not wish to be filmed or recorded should make themselves known and will be provided with an area where cameras cannot reach. No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent. Anyone wishing to report on the meeting should notify the Clerk or Chair 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 Chair and should sit in the area designated for this purpose. Improper conduct or any disruptive behaviour 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 Parish Council meeting agenda (which is held in May) is the election of Chair. At all other meetings the agenda follows (not necessarily in this order):

- Welcome by the Chair (note that if the Chair is not in attendance then the Vice Chair will take the meeting. If neither are able to attend then the other councillors elect a Chair for that meeting).
- Receive and accept apologies from councillors
- Declaration of interests and requests for dispensations
- To agree the minutes of the meeting held previously
- To note any matters arising not included on the agenda and for information only
- To receive reports from the Borough and County Councillors and the Police if present
- Public participation time
- To discuss and agree any items (the details of those items are given on the agenda)
- To discuss and make decisions on any planning applications as detailed (although please note it is the District Council who has the final say on planning applications – we are only consultees in the planning process).
- To discuss and act on any items of correspondence notified by the Clerk
- To agree the financial matters as presented
- To note items for inclusion on the next council agenda
- To note the date of the next meetings

**How to contact us**
The contact details for the Parish Clerk and the Chair are on the FPC website.