

Stroud District Council Scheme for Public Speaking at Development Control Committee.

What is public speaking?

Most local authorities allow members of the public to address councillors at regulatory committees which deal with planning applications. This is generally referred to as **public speaking**. Due to the quasi-judicial nature of these committee meetings it is necessary for there to be structure to public involvement. These arrangements are set out below.

Who can address the Development Control Committee?

Given the nature of the committee, the ability to address the decision makers must be equitable and proportional. As such, provision is made for specific parties to speak in turn:

1. Ward Councillor(s)
2. Parish Council
3. Those who oppose the proposal
4. Those who are promoting the scheme.

There is no compulsion to speak, for example, a neighbour who objects to a scheme does not need to address the committee; their written submissions will be taken into account.

The schedule of applications for DCC is posted on the website 5 days prior to the committee meeting, with ward members and parishes being sent a copy by email. On large scale applications opposition groups are readily identified, however, it is not practicable, in all cases, for all parties to be contacted individually. Whilst every effort will be made to inform the public at large, individuals should check the website and schedule listings regularly. It should be noted that approximately only 1 in 20 applications go before DCC.

Whilst speakers may wish to confirm their intention to attend the meeting with the case officer, they are encouraged to co-ordinate their efforts. The Chair will ask at the beginning of proceedings if there are persons present who would wish to speak, with the expectation that the parties will have appointed a spokesperson to represent their collective views.

What is the purpose of Public Speaking?

Public speaking gives the relevant parties the opportunity of directly addressing the decision makers at the point of determination. It is proposed to allow public speaking on items within the schedule of applications, and not other items on the agenda.

The purpose of public speaking is to emphasise comments and evidence already submitted through the planning system. Speakers should refrain from bringing photographs or other documents as it is not an opportunity to introduce new evidence.

All contributors are made aware of what is a material consideration at the time of preparing their written submissions and as such should make reference to these material considerations only. To do otherwise would be to waste time on issues which members could not take into consideration. Officers are available to give advice on which matters are considered to be material, and these will also be highlighted in the committee report.

Procedure notes will be produced at the beginning of each schedule, for the avoidance of doubt.

How long can each group speak for?

With the exception of ward members, who are covered by the council's standing orders, the other three slots are limited to a maximum of three minutes each. If there is more than one objector they should either agree a spokesman or share the three minutes equally. The applicant, agent, or supporters will share one slot on the same basis. The town/parish council can be represented by a councillor or officer, such as the clerk. Only the parish within which the application is located will be allowed to address the committee.

Where sister applications are being considered in tandem, for example a householder application and a listed building application, the allotted time will be extended to five minutes for each slot so that both aspects of the applications are debated at the same time. In exceptional circumstances the Chair of DCC may vary the length of each slot or divide the slot between speakers where no agreement has been reached; however, each slot within an application will be offered a similar opportunity so that impartiality is maintained.

If an application is deferred to a future meeting, it shall be taken that the item is resumed and the public speaking from the previous occasion shall be taken into account by members of DCC. Ward members will retain the rights within the constitution to provide an update to the community views.

Operational arrangements

The running order for each application on the schedule of DCC.

1. Introduction of item by the Chair
2. Brief update by the planning officer.
3. Public Speaking
 - a. Ward Member(s)
 - b. Parish Council
 - c. Those who oppose
 - d. Those who support
4. Member questions of officers
5. Motion
6. Debate
7. Vote

For applications returning from deferral.

1. Introduction of item by the Chair
2. Brief update by the planning officer.
3. Ward Member(s)
4. Member questions of officers
5. Motion
6. Debate
7. Vote