

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITH SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

- 2.1 The Council encourages and actively supports the public getting involved in its work to serve the Council's area. The Council wants to make it easy for people to get involved and give their views to help influence and develop what the Council does and the decisions it takes.
- 2.2 The Council welcomes suggestions which will help improve the way it works and how it involves the public.
- 2.3 Set out below are a number of ways in which members of the public can get involved with the Council's work and the decisions the Council makes.

Attendance at Meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings

- 2.4 Members of the public are encouraged to attend meetings of the Council to hear debates. The members of the public are only able to speak at certain meetings, but all meetings are open and are usually also streamed online.
- 2.5 Details of when and where meetings will be held are published on the Council's website. The agenda and papers for a meeting provide information about what will be covered in the meeting and are also published on the Council's website at least five clear working days ahead of the date of the meeting.
- 2.6 There are limited occasions when the Council needs to discuss exempt or confidential matters at a meeting. When this happens members of the public and the press are excluded from the meeting while these matters are discussed. This is also called a 'private session'. The Council will only exclude members of the public and the press from a meeting when it is absolutely necessary and where there is legal justification for the meeting going into a private session.

Public Speaking

- 2.7 The public can speak in accordance with set procedures at the following meetings:
 - (a) Scrutiny Committees;
 - (b) The Council;
 - (c) Planning Committee or Regulatory Committees.

Petitions

- 2.8 The Council is pleased to accept written or e-petitions dealing with something for which the Council is responsible. There are rules which set out how to make a petition to the Council, what happens when a petition is received and how the Council responds in Part 2 below.

Consultation

- 2.9 The Council aims to consult as widely and as fairly as possible where required. Sometimes, with matters such as planning and licensing applications, there are specific statutory consultation processes that the Council must follow, otherwise where a statutory consultation is required, the Council will try to consult on important decisions as widely as practicable and give feedback about the outcome of the consultations.

Webcasting and Social Media

- 2.10 Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Council as detailed above. Many meetings are also streamed for viewing online using the Council's webcast service.
- 2.11 Updates from the Council are also available on various social media platforms, which can be found on the Council's website here: [Social Media & Other Digital Platform Links](#).

Budget and Policy Development

- 2.12 The Council is keen to include and involve members of the public when councillors come to set the Council's budgets and key policies so that residents can provide their views on the decisions the Council makes.
- 2.13 When appropriate the Council may run consultations inviting people to have their say. Focus groups, residents' panels or user panels may also be arranged as a way of involving people and seeking their views.