

A Guide to Council Meetings and public representation

The Council hopes that this short guide will encourage members of the public to attend its meetings and will be particularly helpful for those unfamiliar with meetings procedure.

Why are meetings held?

Aside from the fact that there is a statutory obligation for the Council to meet, meetings are the Council's principal means by which to discuss issues, formulate policies and make decisions on matters affecting the Pontyclun Community Council wards of Pontyclun, Miskin, Cefn yr Hendy and Groesfaen.

Who can attend?

Anyone. However, if the Council needs to consider certain matters in confidence – such as employee issues, negotiating contracts or pursuing/defending a legal action – Councillors may vote to exclude the public and press.

When are meetings held?

Meetings of the Community Council and its committees are held at Café 50/ Pontyclun Community Centre, Heol yr Orsaf, Pontyclun, normally on the third Wednesday of the month, with the meeting commencing at 7.00pm.

The agendas for meetings (usually published 5 days earlier) appear on the Council's web site and the community noticeboards.

Why should I attend?

- To raise an issue or concern
- To become better informed about topical issues and matters impacting on the wellbeing of the wards and their inhabitants
- To observe Councillors' participation in decision-making

What happens at meetings?

The area set aside for the public and press (the 'Public Gallery') lies slightly away from the meeting. If you have a hearing or visual impairment, arrangements will be made for you to sit closer to the Councillors.

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 chairman who is responsible for the conduct of the meeting and for ensuring that the business specified on the agenda is carried out.

The Clerk will normally be present and is responsible for preparing agendas, taking Minutes and helping

Councillors make decisions that are informed, procedurally correct and lawful.

The meeting will normally follow this order

- Apologies
- Declaration of interests
- Confirmation of minutes of prior meeting
- Specific agenda items including
 - Clerks report
 - Confirmation of Council payments
 - Requests from residents

Agenda items may be reports about Council business or potential actions to be taken. The Council may also discuss its plans for the future and responses to government and Borough Council consultations.

When can I speak?

In each meeting there will either be a specific session set aside for the public to speak/ask questions or the public may be able to contribute at the relevant time in the meeting.

The time allowed for public to speak is up to 30 minutes long. Individuals can speak on one agenda item for up to 5 minutes. If you wish to speak on more issues please contact the Clerk ahead of the meeting so that special arrangements can be made if appropriate.

The Councillors and staff present 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 may reply to you in writing.

It is the chairman who determines who shall speak, in which order and for how long.

If the chairman of a meeting considers that a member of the public present may have information which would help Councillors or committee members make an informed decision, s/he may – with the permission of the meeting – invite that member of the public to speak during the actual meeting.

Note: Other opportunities exist to raise concerns with the Council – including: contacting Councillors directly or contacting the Community Council Office.

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 Community Council Office for help and guidance. If we know you are coming to a meeting we can make sure there is someone there to greet and advise you.