

Dartford Borough Council

Protocol for Public Speaking at Development Control Board

1. The Council welcomes public speaking on any planning application that the Development Control Board is proposing to determine and on any other planning matters that are being considered by the Board where consultation with the public has taken place and representations have been received.

If you have difficulties accessing our public speaking service, please see section 4(d) below, which sets out the option of submitting a written statement, which will be read out on your behalf at the Board meeting.

2. If a report is due to be considered by the Development Control Board, the Council will write to all those who have commented on the agenda item, as well as the applicant and agent advising them of the time and date of the meeting and of the arrangements for public speaking.
3. If a petition with less than six signatures is received, the Council will write to all signatories. If a petition has six or more signatures, the Council will write to the lead petitioner or if that is not obvious, the first signatory.

4. Registering to speak

- (a) Individuals who have submitted a written response to the application and the applicant/agent/landowner may register to speak. Where more than one speaker wishes to speak in support of a recommendation, precedence will be given to the applicant/agent/landowner.
- (b) One speaker will be allowed to speak in favour of a recommendation and one against. This will be operated on a “first come first served” basis. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Council will give priority to the first person that registers.
- (c) Speakers must register their intention with the Development Control section no later than 12:00 p.m. on the Monday before the Board meeting. Once the register is closed, no changes or additions to the list of speakers will be allowed. If a speaker who has already registered wishes to stand down in favour of another speaker, they must do so before the deadline. The Chairman may, in exceptional circumstances, use his/her discretion to allow changes to be made after this deadline. Successful speakers will be notified and advised of the protocol.
- (d) If a speaker has a disability which makes it difficult for them to make use of the public speaking facility at the Board meeting, or is otherwise unable to attend the Board meeting, a written statement can be submitted by the speaker, which will be read to the Board by the Chairman (or nominee) during the relevant part of the meeting. The written statement should be no

more than three minutes in duration, or no more than 400 words in length, to be received by the Council (at an email address that will have been advised) by 10.00am on the day of the meeting, at the latest. Where a written statement contains inappropriate language, the offending sections will not be read to the Board.

Please note that the Chairman (or nominee) will read the written statement only – no questions will be taken on and nor will any views be articulated/expressed on the contents of the written statement, otherwise than as part of the debate on the relevant agenda item.

Where a speaker is unable to produce a written statement, subject to the Chairman's agreement, they may be represented at the Board meeting by another person (not a Councillor).

The Council accepts no responsibility for any defamatory, insulting, personal or confidential information or information, which is otherwise actionable, contained in a written statement and read to the Board.

- (e) In accordance with Standing Order 36(2), Members who are not members of the Board have the opportunity (generally on 24 hours' written notice to the Democratic Services Manager) to request to speak on any agenda item(s), providing they do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest or prejudicial interest in the item and subject to the Chairman being satisfied that the item directly affects the ward which the Member represents. The decision to accept such a request will be at the Chairman's discretion and his/her decision will be final.
- (f) The Board's decision making process must be seen to be fair and impartial from the perspective of an external observer. Therefore, Councillors cannot 'stand in' for a speaker who has registered to speak at a Board meeting. To do otherwise, could leave the Board's decision making process open to accusation of partiality or undue influence.

5. Order of speakers and conduct of meeting

- (a) The Chairman may take agenda items in an order, which reflects the degree of public interest.
- (b) For items where there are speakers opposed to the recommendation, the officer will first make a presentation, describing the proposal, outlining the main planning considerations and concluding with a recommendation. This will be followed by public speaking.
- (c) Where the recommendation is for approval, objectors will have the opportunity to speak first, followed by any supporter. The reverse will apply for cases where the recommendation is one of refusal.

- (d) Each speaker will be limited to no more than three minutes speaking time, to present their statement to the Board.
- (e) Speakers may not distribute or display any written or visual material, e.g., written statements, photos, videos etc.
- (f) Members or officers may wish to clarify any points with the speaker before Members consider the agenda item, where the method of the speaker's attendance at the meeting makes this possible. Thereafter, no further speaking will be allowed and the speaker will have no further rights to address the meeting, but may continue to observe the meeting for as long as the meeting is in open public session.
- (g) The Chairman will have absolute discretion to curtail or extend speaking in individual cases if considered appropriate.
- (h) This protocol will apply to items, which have previously been deferred by the Board for whatever reason.