

Seascale Parish Council

Public Participation Scheme

Summary of Public Rights

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with Seascale Parish Council. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others have been agreed by the Council.

Citizens have the right to:

- Vote at local elections if they are registered to do so. Contact their local Councillor about any matters of concern to them.
- Attend meetings of the Council except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed.
- Participate in the Council's question time.
- Present a petition.
- Inspect and obtain copies of reports and background papers and any record of decisions made by the Council.
- Complain to the Council under its complaints procedure.
- Complain to the Monitoring Officer of Cumberland Council should a Member of the Council breach the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.
- Inspect and obtain copies of any recorded information held by the Council.
(subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000)

Seascale Parish Council welcomes participation by its citizens in its work.

Rights to attend Meetings

Members of the public may attend all meetings subject only to specific exceptions where for example personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

Parish Council meetings are held monthly, except for August. Dates are available via the Council's website.

Notices of Meetings

The Council will give at least 3 clear days' notice before any meeting by posting details of the meeting on the Council noticeboard and website.

Access to agenda and reports before the meeting

The Council will make copies of the agenda and reports open to the public available for inspection from 3 clear days before the meeting by contacting the Clerk.

Supply of Copies

The Council will supply copies of:

(a) Any Agenda

(b) Any report

(c) Any background paper

To any person either free of charge via email (if available) or upon payment of a charge for photocopying and postage.

Access to the minutes etc after the meeting

The Council will make available draft copies of minutes within 10 working days of the meeting. These can be obtained by contacting the Clerk.

Please note that copies of approved minutes are available via the Councils website.

Background Papers

The Clerk will set out in every report a list of those documents (called background papers) relating to the subject matter of the report which in their opinion

(a) Disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based and

(b) Which have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report.

Published works or those documents which disclose exempt or confidential information will not be included.

Rights to attend and speak at meetings

Although the public have a right to attend meetings, there is no automatic right to speak at meetings. The public participation period is included in the agenda as a part of Seascale Parish Council's commitment to community engagement.

The Parish Council meeting is not a public meeting, it is a Council meeting held in public. The public are asked to respect the fact that this is a meeting to conduct Council business and outside of the public participation section, interruptions are not permitted.

Presenting a Petition

Any elector of Seascale Parish may present a petition to a meeting of the Council if it relates to something which affects the functions, inhabitants, or area of the Authority and is signed by people who are not councillors.

An elector must notify the Clerk of their intention to present a petition at least two working days before the meeting at which it will be presented.

Each petitioner or deputation will be allowed to speak for up to 3 minutes. The presentation will be limited to reading out or summarising the purpose of the petition, stating the number and description of the signatories and making any relevant supporting remarks as the petitioner thinks fit.

Petitions will be presented in the order in which they are received by the Clerk.

Submitting a Question

Any elector of Seascale Parish may ask a question of the Council on any matter which the Council has powers.

A question about a matter not on the agenda may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or via email to the Clerk no later than 2 days before the meeting. An individual may only submit one written question per meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner.

Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received, except that the Chair may group similar questions together.

The Clerk may reject a question if it:

- (a) It is not about a matter for which the Council has responsibility or which affects the Parish.
- (b) Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive.
- (C) Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the last 6 months; or
- (d) Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

Asking Questions at the Meeting

The Chair will invite those who have submitted written questions to put them to the Council. If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the Chair to put the question on their behalf. The Chair may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply will be given or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question be not dealt with.

All written questions will be put and may be debated by the Council. The person asking the question has a right of reply at the end of the debate for up to 3 minutes.

Questions may be asked, without written notice, about items on the agenda. Members of the public should raise their hand to indicate their wish to be heard.

No person may speak for more than 3 minutes and time will be limited so that no further questions may be put after 15 minutes from the start of the first question.

Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time either because of lack of time or because it requires a technical answer will be dealt with by written answer.

Summary of Public Rights

A written summary of the public's rights to attend meetings and inspect and copy documents will be made available to the public on the Council's web site.

Freedom of Information Act

A written summary of the Council's publication scheme is available to members of the public on the Council's web site.