



The Essentials

The Essentials is a collection of simple reference guides for councillors and officers.

These guides aim to provide a plain English summary of the Council's main policies, procedures and processes.

- ◆ The Council and it's Constitution
- ◆ Council Decision Making
- ◆ Member Interests
- ◆ Member Expenses
- ◆ Member Development and Training
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- ◆ Call-in
- ◆ Regulatory Committee
- ◆ Outside Bodies
- ◆ Effective Chairing
- ◆ Media Engagement
- ◆ Meetings of Full Council
- ◆ Public Engagement Protocol

These guides provide guidance only and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Constitution.

The Council and Its Constitution: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides a basic overview of what the Council is, how it operates and what responsibilities it has.

What is the County Council?

Warwickshire County Council is the elected administrative body governing the county of Warwickshire. The Council provides a wide range of services to over half a million residents and works with other public, private and voluntary organisations to make Warwickshire a better place for people to live and work. Its specific responsibilities include:

- Schools and providing educational opportunities;
- Social care services for adults and children's safeguarding;
- The Fire and Rescue Service;
- Maintaining Country Parks;
- The Trading Standards Service;
- Highways and other public rights of way;

Matters such as housing and leisure are responsibilities of [District and Borough Councils](#)

What are Councillors?

There are 57 county councillors who are elected every four years to represent each electoral division in Warwickshire. Collectively they are known as the Council. They meet together at least 6 times a year to decide what the main plans and policies of the council should be and to set the budget.

What are Councillors Responsibilities?

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their electoral division, including those constituents who did not vote for them. Their responsibilities include:

- Representing the people of Warwickshire, the interests of their electoral division and individual constituents;
- Providing community leadership and contributing to the good governance of the area;
- Actively encouraging participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
- Making policy and participating in the governance and management of the Council;
- Promoting and maintaining the highest standards of conduct and ethics in the conduct of council business.

What is the difference between Councillors and Officers?

The Council has people working for it (called officers) who implement the policy and decisions agreed by councillors, give advice and manage the day-to-day delivery of the Council's wide range of services such as: education, social care, transport, planning, libraries and finance. Some officers have specific roles to help the Council act within the law and use its resources wisely.

How is the Council organised?

Full Council: consists of all the county councillors meeting together to make decisions about the policies to be adopted (known as the policy framework) and to set the annual budget and overall priorities of the Council.

Cabinet: consists of the Leader of the Council and up to 9 other county councillors. The Leader is appointed by Council who in turn appoints his/her Cabinet. The Cabinet is responsible for most policy decisions (within the policy framework agreed by Council). The Leader has delegated some decisions to individual Cabinet members, also known as portfolio holders. There is also a scheme delegating powers to officers to enable them to take day to day decisions within the policies set by the Council and Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees: These play an important part in the development of policies and improving service delivery. They review how the council is performing and monitor proposed and implemented Cabinet decisions. These committees have the right to delay a Cabinet decision where they believe further consideration is needed.

Regulatory Committee: deals primarily with planning applications, licensing and arrangements for various types of appeals.

A full List of the council's formal bodies can be found in [the Constitution](#).

What is the Constitution?

The constitution sets out:

- How the Council operates and how decisions are made
- How citizens, businesses and other organisations can participate
- The procedures to ensure the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable

Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose. The constitution is divided into six different parts:

Part 1: An overview of the constitution and how the council is organised;
Part 2: Responsibilities and powers of Council, the Cabinet, committees and officers;
Part 3: Procedure rules of council's business and the decision-making process;
Part 4: Codes of conduct to be followed by councillors and employees;
Part 5: Members allowances scheme of allowances payable to councillors
Part 6: The management structure of the Council

Unless otherwise stated, please direct all queries to Democratic Services at:
Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk **Tel:** 01926 413716
Address: ***Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL***

Council Decision Making: The Essentials

Overview - This guide offers an overview of the council's decision making structure, including information on: motions, the forward plan, key and urgent decisions.

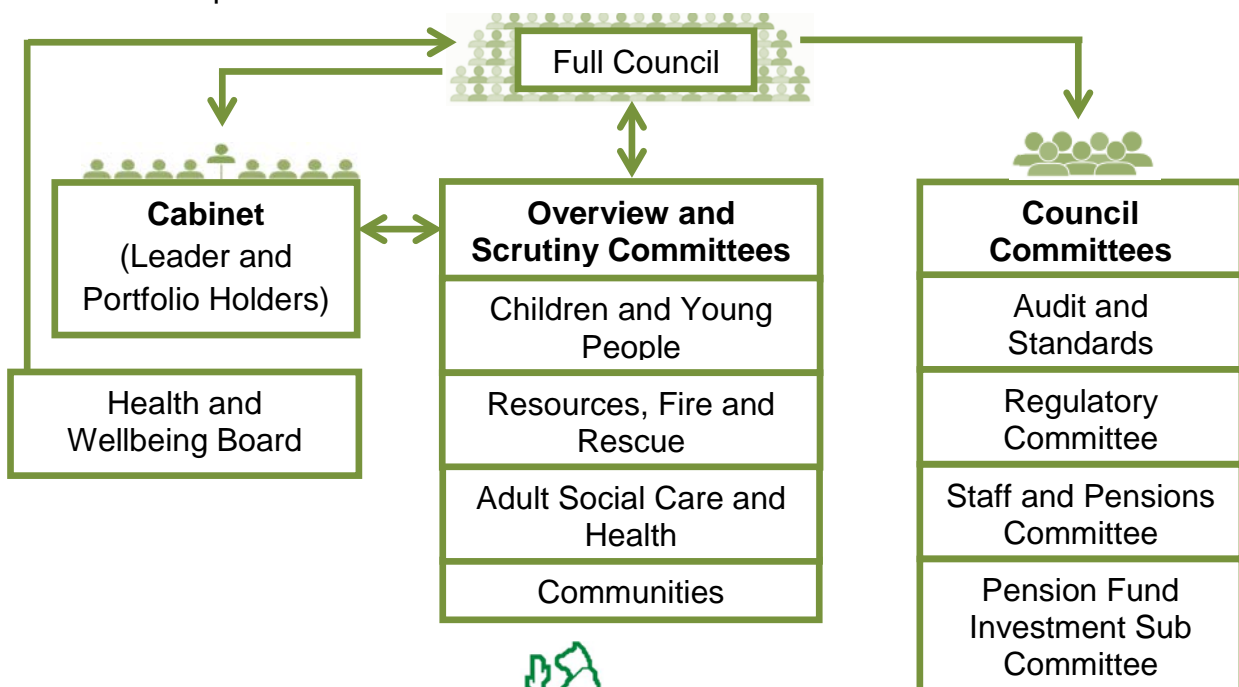
What is the council's decision making structure?

The Council comprises 57 councillors and is responsible for deciding the Council's overall policies and setting the budget (and council tax) each year. The Council appoints the Leader for a four year term. The Leader then appoints up to 9 councillors who together with the Leader form a Cabinet. The Cabinet is responsible for the majority of significant decisions made by the council.

The Council's powers are divided into executive and non-executive functions. The Council is the ultimate decision-maker for non-executive functions (These are listed in legislation). The Leader is the ultimate decision-maker for executive functions (everything else which is not listed as non-executive function).

Some executive decisions are taken by the Cabinet collectively whilst others are taken by the Leader, or other Cabinet members as individuals. Each Cabinet member is allocated a particular area of responsibility known as a portfolio. The Leader or Cabinet members have to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. The Council cannot override decisions taken by Cabinet unless the decision is contrary to the budget or policy framework. The Council has delegated some of its non-executive functions to committees to help manage its workload.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees consist of elected members who are not members of Warwickshire's decision-making Cabinet. These committees hold the Cabinet to account and examine specific areas with a view to influencing the development of policies and decisions. They perform a 'check and balance' and 'critical friend' function to the Cabinet by reviewing existing and proposed policies and decisions to ensure the continuous improvement of services in Warwickshire.



What is the forward plan?

The forward plan, accessed through the council's Committee Management Information System ([CMIS](#)), contains a list of all the items to be considered by each of the council's bodies and key executive decisions taken by officers. It gives details of the person or body who will take the decision, the decision date, and any associated documents.

What is a key decision?

These are significant executive decisions and are defined as likely to:

- result in the local authority spending or saving more than £500,000; or
- be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in any electoral division in Warwickshire; or
- involve proposals or decisions that affect the policy framework, involve new policy or affect the annual budget.

What is an urgent decision?

A decision will be urgent if any delay would seriously prejudice the Council or public interests. The Chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee must give written consent to a decision being treated as urgent, and if no relevant chair is able to act, the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Council may consent.

What is a motion?

This is the term used for a formal proposal put forward by a councillor for debate and decision at a Full Council meeting. The motion must relate to council services or something that the Council can influence. The motion will not be accepted by the Monitoring Officer if it seeks Council approval to service or policy changes without applying the usual robust decision making process (i.e. an officer report with full information, options and expert advice). For this reason, motions usually request officers/Cabinet to investigate and report back for decision.

What is the procedure for motions?

Notice of motions must be received 10 clear working days before the council meeting and are placed on the Council agenda in order of receipt.

The Chair at the meeting will invite the proposer of the motion to speak and will ask for a seconder before any further debate. The seconder may formally second but reserve their right to speak later in the debate. The seconder can only speak once in a debate so reserving their speech allows them to reply to comments made in the debate.

The Chair will invite proposers and seconders of any amendments to speak. Only proposers of motions or amendments have an opportunity to speak twice – once in proposing and again in summing up. This is also known as a right of reply.

At the conclusion of the debate, the chair will invite seconders of any amendments to speak (unless already spoken) followed by movers of amendments. The same process will then apply to the original motion. A vote is then taken on the amendments in the order seconded and then on the (amended) motion.

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Member Interests: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of what councillors need to do to register their pecuniary interests, what constitutes a conflict of interest, and what action should be taken in the event of a conflict.

Why must I disclose my interests?

If you are an elected or co-opted member of the County Council, you are required to sign up to the council's [Code of Conduct](#) and register a list of your pecuniary interests. A register of all pecuniary interests must be kept by the Council to provide the public with confidence that councillors are putting the public interest first and are not using their position as a councillor improperly. Specific legislative provisions concerning member pecuniary interests are made under the Localism Act 2011.

What is a pecuniary interest?

A councillor's pecuniary interests are their business and financial interests and those of their spouse or civil partner or someone they are living with as such. This may include, for example; their employment, trade, profession, contracts, or any company with which they are associated. Pecuniary interests also include any wider financial interests including, for example; investments, and assets including land and property. You must publicly disclose your pecuniary interest and register that interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have an interest of the type listed in the [national rules](#)

Who can see the register of members' interests?

A register of members' interests must be available for public inspection and must be published on the Council's website. All member registers are stored on our [Committee Management Information System](#) which is maintained by Democratic Services.

What if I don't follow the rules on disclosable interests?

It is a criminal offence if, without a reasonable excuse, you fail to tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests. This includes needing to inform the Monitoring Officer of any changes for inclusion on the register if you are newly elected or co-opted, or if you are re-elected or re-appointed. Councillors are also obliged to inform the Monitoring Officer when you become aware of an interest which is not recorded in the register, but which relates to any matter that will be considered at a meeting where you are present. It is also a criminal offence to knowingly provide false or misleading information, or to participate in the matter where you have a pecuniary interest.

What must I do?

After being elected or co-opted to the Council, you must:

- a) Within 28 days, sign and complete a declaration form of your pecuniary interests, which includes those of your spouse/civil partner, or someone with whom you are living as such.
- b) When attending meetings of the council, cabinet, committees, sub-committees or joint committees and a matter arises in which you have a pecuniary interest, unless you have been granted a dispensation, you must:
 - Declare the interest;
 - Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with;
 - Not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter;
 - Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting.
- (c) If you are the Leader or a Portfolio Holder, not exercise any of your delegated powers as a single member in relation to a matter in which you have a pecuniary interest. You must give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of becoming aware of the interest, and arrange for another person or body to deal with the matter.

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Member Expenses: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides councillors with an overview of the member's allowances scheme, which entitles them to a basic allowance and rights to claim for travel and subsistence.

What expenses am I entitled to?

Provision for a members allowance scheme is made under the Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The County Council has agreed to a scheme of expenses for its councillors, taking into account recommendations from an independent remuneration panel.

All members receive a basic allowance, paid by monthly instalments through payroll. This recognises that the role of a councillor is voluntary and that the allowance does not set out to fully recompense all work undertaken. The basic allowance is a contribution to the time spent by elected members in performing their duties and also covers incidental costs, such as: stationery, broadband connection and charges, telephone line rentals/usage and room hire for surgeries. The basic allowance for Warwickshire County Councillors is £9263.

What are Special Responsibility Allowances?

The Council has agreed to pay an additional allowance to those identified as having special responsibilities. The amount paid to councillors with special responsibilities varies according to the demands of the role. The Leader, Cabinet Members and committee chairs, among others, are entitled to receive a special responsibility allowance. A councillor can only claim one special responsibility allowance and they may waive this allowance if they wish.

What ICT equipment is available for me to use?

The Council provides councillors with a choice of IT devices to enable them to meet the demands of their role, including the provision of either a laptop or iPad. For technical IT advice, councillors should contact the ICT Helpdesk on 01926 414141.

Can I claim travel expenses?

Councillors are entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses for approved duties from the member's home address or starting point, whichever is shorter. Each member has a standard mileage from their home to Shire Hall as agreed with the monitoring officer. Approved duties include, but are not limited to, attendance at:

- Any formal body of the council
- Any consultation meetings arranged by the County Council – where the member is required or where the issue directly affects the member's division.
- Seminars or training sessions arranged by the council and open to all councillors or open to members of a particular committee.
- Meetings of parish or town councils in your electoral division.
- Resident surgeries
- Group meetings that consider county council business

Councillors should not claim for school governing body meetings, civic events and visits to constituents. They should also not claim for political group meetings or activities in support of a political party including canvassing. If there is any doubt over what can and cannot be claimed for, please contact the Democratic Services Team.

How much can I claim?

There is no limit to the amount of travel expenses a councillor may claim, so long as travel is reasonable and accords with the approved duties. The following rates apply:

Travel	
Private car	40p per mile (plus 10p p/m for passengers on approved duties).
Motorcycle or Bicycle:	20p per mile
Public Transport:	Actual cost is paid, but must not exceed the cost of a standard fair. First class tickets will not be reimbursed. The Council will also pay for the cost of disability railcard or senior railcards.
Taxi cab:	Actual cost is paid, only in cases of urgency or when no public service is reasonably provided.
Air or Sea	Flights or ferry travel will only be reimbursed if the rate compares reasonably with the cost of alternative means of travel. This must be cleared in advance with the Democratic Services Manager.
Subsistence	
Lunch and dinner	Only claimable if lunch or tea is not provided, and receipts must be provided. Members can claim up to £6.50 for lunch if away from home for more than four hours, including the period between 12 noon and 2.00pm, and up to £8.00 for tea if away from home for more than four hours ending after 7.00pm.
Overnight Lodging	If away from home overnight - £80 (to cover a continuous period of absence of 24 hours) or £100 for London.
Dependant Carer's Allowance	For those who incur expenditure on the care of children, or other dependants whilst the member is undertaking approved duties. The current rates are: <u>Child below school age/under 14 out of school hours:</u> £5.50 per hour <u>Elderly, sick or disabled dependant requiring constant care:</u> £18 per hour.

Taxation

Every member's position regarding liability for tax is personal to them. Expenses paid by the council can be viewed as 'taxable benefits' and you may be liable to pay tax. The LGIU produce a [guide for councillors](#) which is available through Democratic Services.

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Member Development and Training: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of the approach taken by Warwickshire County Council to member development and training. It explains why training is important and the opportunities available to councillors.

Why is Member Development and Training Necessary?

Warwickshire County Council is committed to ensuring councillors have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to most effectively undertake their role for the benefit of the residents of Warwickshire. Members come from a diverse range of backgrounds and will bring their own valuable experiences to local government, but it is important that there is a programme of continuous development and support for all members to enable them to be confident and skilled in their role.

What Development and Training is Required?

Some training is essential to ensure members are aware of the legal restrictions or requirements of their role. For example all members sign the Council's Code of Conduct and therefore need to be aware of the principles that underlie this. All councillors are also required to understand their role in relation to safeguarding, equality and diversity and information governance. Councillors on the Regulatory Committee have specific training on planning (a minimum of 12 hours over 24 months) and those who take part on ad hoc staff recruitment or appeals panels will be required to undertake bespoke training.

Aside from the essential 'core' training, there are many other areas that form part of an on-going training and development programme.

What Development and Training is Available?

There is an intensive member induction programme following every county council elections. This covers a wide range of knowledge and skills beginning with the fundamental essential training and how the Council is structured and operates and then covering key policy areas. The latter part of the programme sees a shift to skills such as time management, speed reading etc. The induction programme will have been largely completed by Christmas of the first year of the new council. There will then follow programme of sessions prompted by:

- Officers
- Councillors
- Local or national events
- Changes to legislation

The diary includes dates reserved for seminars/development events that can be identified in year in response to events or needs of the time.

Methods of Delivering Training

Most of the development and training provided to members is delivered by County Council staff in a face to face setting at Shire Hall. Historically, a variety of experienced internal staff have delivered effective training for members, and this will continue. Sometimes service users or partner agencies are invited to support a member development session to enable councillors to get a sense of the reality of the topic in question.

Specialist trainers are occasionally commissioned to deliver sessions. These are usually skills-based e.g. chairing skills or time management.

The Democratic Services Team is always on the lookout for training opportunities beyond Shire Hall. The Local Government Association, for example, provides a range of training opportunities that are delivered locally at Warwick University and around the country. Conferences offer an opportunity for members to learn and network. These can be expensive and there is an expectation that councillors attending these will be prepared to share their learning with others.

Warwickshire County Council champions the use of e-learning. This is an area that has grown significantly over the last four years. E-learning is part of the induction process, and new members are signposted to the e-learning portal and encouraged to explore courses on there. Some e-learning courses mirror the training provided on a face to face basis. However, this is seen as positive in that they can be used to reinforce messages conveyed in the classroom. E-learning courses include the use of social media, information compliance and public speaking, among many others.

How do I get Trained?

The Democratic Services Team includes an officer who, amongst other responsibilities, is responsible for providing effective member training. Members are invited to look out for training opportunities that they consider may assist them in their role and officers are also encouraged to propose topics for training.

Members should contact Democratic Services with any specific requests or suggestions and officers there will do their best to meet them.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committees: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an outline of what the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees are, how they operate, and how they can be used to improve the delivery of council services.

What are Overview and Scrutiny Committees?

Overview and Scrutiny Committees comprise of councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. They are cross party and some include external co-optees. Their key role is to act as the 'check and balance' and 'critical friend' to the Cabinet by reviewing existing and proposed policies and decisions. The ultimate aim is to ensure effective decision making and the continuous improvement of services in Warwickshire. From time to time, these committees will also fulfil the Council's community leadership role by looking beyond services provided by the Council to consider issues affecting the wider community, such as health services.

What powers do Overview and Scrutiny Committees have?

Overview and Scrutiny Committees have no decision making powers, but they do have considerable influence through their public scrutiny of issues and the advice and recommendations they provide to Cabinet, but also more widely to the Council and partners. The key aim of the Committees is to improve service provision in Warwickshire and this is done most effectively through well-reasoned, realistic and evidence based recommendations. Through this diligent approach the committees have been able to influence decisions through revision or withdrawal of proposals but have also played an important part in policy development.

What is Call-in?

Call-in is a formal process which allows councillors to query an executive decision. A more comprehensive guide to Call-in had been produced as part of the Essentials Short Guides. Call-in allows an opportunity for review of the decision by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A special meeting is convened within 10 days to consider a call in and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder is invited to explain the reasons for the decision and to hear the Committee's views. The Committee can choose to make recommendations back to Cabinet or may be satisfied and accept the decision. Call-in is not used lightly but has proved influential in ensuring concerns have been taken into account and it has led to decisions being amended.

How do Overview and Scrutiny Committees work?

Overview and scrutiny committees agree their own work programme which they keep under review to ensure issues of the greatest public concern are treated as a priority. The roles of the committee are to both hold Cabinet to account as well as support policy development. The Cabinet Portfolio Holders attend the committees to both answer questions and to update members on policy development.

The Committees also invite officers to present information on particular services/issues and may decide to undertake more in-depth reviews. The reviews may take the form of a single subject committee meeting (select committee) or task and finish group (see below) and the committee may invite expert speakers, service users and community groups to give their views. It is important that an objective approach to evidence collection is taken and that the committees are conducted in an open and constructive manner.

What are Task and Finish Groups?

In some instances, committees may consider it more effective to establish a small group to carry out a review, where it would be impractical for the whole committee to be involved. These 'Task and Finish Groups' are time limited groups set up by the parent committee and reporting back to the committee on their findings. Membership must not include Cabinet members but does not have to be restricted to members who serve on the Committee. It is important that the membership of the group includes members who have the interest and time to commit to undertaking this in-depth scrutiny. Task and finish group meetings are not bound by the same rights of public access to meetings but may choose to have some or all meetings open to the public.

What are the stages of a Scrutiny Review?

There are 5 stages of a Scrutiny Review:

Scoping: The scoping of a scrutiny review is fundamental to the effectiveness of the whole review process. This starts with identifying outputs and objectives, and clarifying what members hope to achieve. It also considers the method for the review, what evidence is needed, the timeframe for the review and any required publicity.

Evidence gathering: Evidence is then gathered in accordance to what was decided during the scoping exercise. This could involve inviting witnesses, site visits, consultation exercises, examining performance and inspecting reports etc.

Reviewing evidence: Once all the evidence has been gathered, it then needs to be reviewed. This is where members take stock and assess the evidence, and decide if enough information is available to draw reasonable conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions and recommendations: Conclusions and recommendations relate to what has been learnt, and how these lessons can be addressed. SMART recommendations should be formally put to the decision taker to (re)consider before implementing a decision or service change.

Monitoring and evaluation: Although responsibility for the implementation any recommendation rests with the decision taker and officers, it is essential that mechanisms for monitoring outcomes are established to ensure the recommendations are acted upon. Committees will usually review the implementation of recommendations after 6 months. All stages of the review process will be supported by a Democratic Services Officer.

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Call-In: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of what the call-in process is, and how and when it can be used to strengthen the council's decision making process.

What is call-in?

Call-in is the formal process which allows councillors to question executive decisions before they are implemented. The call-in process automatically delays these types of decisions for at least 10 working days whilst councillors meet to review the decision. A decision can be called in by the Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any four members. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee must then meet within 10 working days of receiving such notice. The committee can; refer the matter back to the decision maker for reconsideration, refer the matter to council or take no action.

When does call-in apply?

Call-in only applies to executive decisions made by the Leader, Cabinet, Cabinet Portfolio Holders or officers making key executive decisions. Once a called-in decision has been referred back to the decision maker for a final decision, or it otherwise takes effect, no further call-in may be exercised.

Call-in does not apply to social services regulatory functions relating to residential homes for children or adults, day care, establishments and child-minders as they all have statutory appeal processes. It also does not apply to operational or day-to-day management decisions taken by officers or urgent decisions where the necessary consent has been obtained.

How is a decision called in?

Decisions are not implemented until the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication of the decisions on the council's website. This allows time for any call-in within that 5 day window. A written request for call-in must be sent to the Democratic Services Manager within those 5 working days. The standard form for call-in requests should be used and reasons for the call-in must be given. The call in must be signed by either the chair of the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee and/or four members.

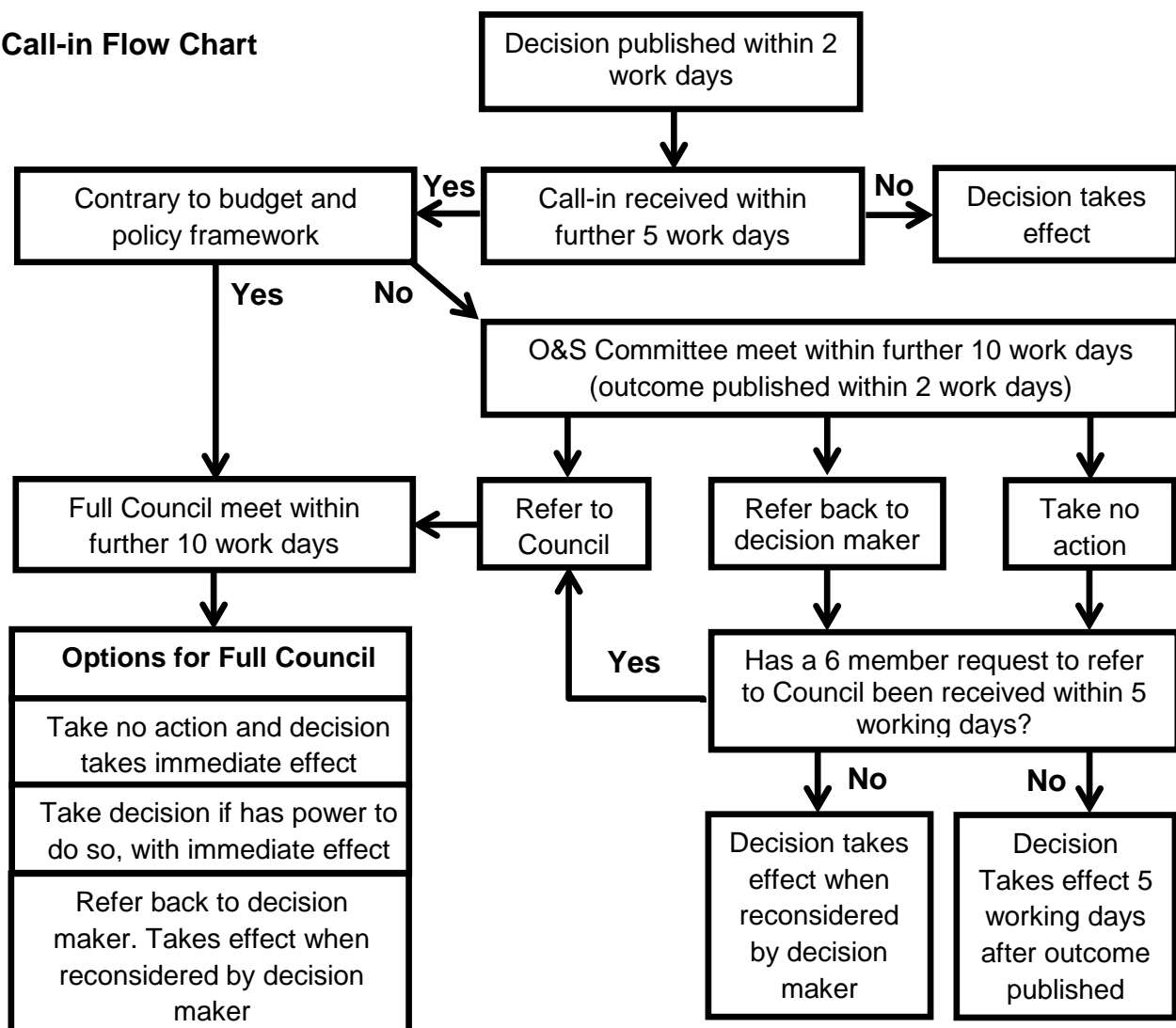
Once the Democratic Services Manager has received notice of the call-in, he/she will notify the relevant decision taker(s) and the chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee that the decision has been called in. In exceptional circumstances, if the Monitoring officer considers a called-in decision to be contrary to the budget or the policy framework, the decision will be referred to a meeting of the Full Council instead of an overview and scrutiny committee. Alternatively, six elected members may ask for a decision to be referred to Full Council by giving written notice, which must be received within 5 working days of the publication of the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The relevant overview and scrutiny committee or Full Council (if appropriate) must meet to consider the decision no later than 10 working days after receipt of the call-in/referral.

What can the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do?

Whilst overview and scrutiny committees cannot change or rescind an executive decision, it can set out any concerns in writing to the decision taker for them to consider. Additionally, the overview and scrutiny committee can refer the decision to the Full Council which must meet within 10 working days of that referral. In order to exert a level of influence, committees should look to make well-reasoned and evidence based recommendations as to why the decision should be altered or withdrawn. Unless the decision is contrary to the budget and policy framework, Full Council can only refer the decision back to the decision maker with comments or decide to take no further action.

If the committee or Full Council are satisfied that the decision has been taken appropriately, then it may decide that no further action be taken and the decision will be implemented at the conclusion of that meeting. The committee may invite any speakers associated with the decision as required.

Call-in Flow Chart



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Regulatory Committee: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of the County Council's Regulatory Committee, including how the Committee operates and what the procedure is for public speaking.

What is the Regulatory Committee?

The Regulatory Committee makes decisions about planning applications for mining, cement works, waste management, licensing, village greens, footpath orders and arrangements for various types of appeals. The committee is comprised of 10 county councillors appointed at the annual meeting of council. Meetings are held each month at Shire hall in Warwick, and they are open to the public, unless otherwise stated. Details of the committee's membership, forthcoming meetings and agendas can be found on the Council's [Committee Management Information System](#). The agenda for each meeting will be made available online at least five clear working days before the meeting.

What is the difference between the District Planning Committees and the County Regulatory Committee?

The responsibilities of the county regulatory committee and district planning committees are often easily confused. Borough and district councils are responsible for most planning matters other than those mentioned above. These can include local planning and building control, the service of enforcement orders, tree preservation orders and modifying or discharging obligations contained in Section 106 agreements.

Do members of the committee receive training?

Members of the Regulatory Committee must undertake training to be recognised as eligible to sit on the committee and take part in the decision making process. Members must complete a minimum of 12 hours of training over a 24 month period. The training usually takes place immediately before committee meetings unless otherwise stated.

What are Delegated Decisions?

Council officers are granted powers to decide minor applications, allowing members to focus on the more substantial decisions. In broad terms, decisions taken by officers are those which are not controversial. This approach assists in speeding up the application process and accelerating development.

Site Inspections

Occasionally, an application may require members to carry out a site inspection for fact finding purposes and visual inspection. These will usually be arranged before the committee meeting where the application is to be decided to avoid any delays.

Can I speak at a Regulatory Committee meeting?

The Regulatory Committee has a specific public speaking scheme. This speaking scheme only applies to applications for planning permission, and for approvals under planning conditions. When an application is being considered by the committee, a planning officer will usually introduce the application. After this introduction, those who are permitted to speak will be able to do so in the following order:

1. The County Councillor (for the local area)
2. Other Councillors (Parish/Town/District Councils)
3. Objectors
4. Supporters
5. The Applicant

It is important for objectors and supporters to register their interest to speak with the Democratic Services Team at the earliest date, as no more than three objectors and three supporters may speak on any one application. Each speaker will have a maximum of three minutes to address the committee.

Speakers are not permitted to circulate any new documents other than photographs, and no presentation aids such as overhead projectors or PowerPoints may be used. Any public speaker will only be allowed to speak once. All speakers will be sent written notification of the decision of the committee.

In exceptional circumstances, the chair has discretion to vary these arrangements as they see appropriate, to ensure the effective discharge of the business at that meeting.

If the committee defers an application to obtain further information or to visit a site, speakers will be allowed to speak when the application is next considered only:

- If they spoke at the first meeting.
- To address any new information which has emerged since the last meeting.

Further details on this committee's procedure rules can be found in the [Constitution](#).

The Democratic Services Officer who supports the Regulatory Committee is Helen Barnsley. Email: helenbarnsley@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 412323

Unless otherwise stated, please direct all queries to Democratic Services at:

Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 413716

Address: Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL



Outside Bodies: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides councillors with a basic overview of what outside bodies are, how councillors can represent such organisations, and what responsibilities are likely to be involved.

What are outside bodies?

Local government is increasingly involved in partnership working with others in the public sector as well as with voluntary and business communities. The nature and role of these bodies varies enormously and ranges from small community based organisations (where representation is generally drawn from the local area) to larger strategic bodies where representation can include members from outside of the County from regional or even national organisations. The County Council has agreed a list of bodies to which the council will appoint representatives and this is available on the democracy page of the [Council's website](#).

How are councillors appointed to outside bodies?

Appointments to the larger strategic organisations and partnerships are agreed by the Council. Others are formally agreed by Cabinet or through Regulatory Committee, according to the nature of the outside body. All appointments are reviewed following county elections, usually through a sub-committee set up for this purpose and appointments made over the summer. The strategic bodies are usually appointed at the annual council meeting in May.

What is the councillor's role on an outside body?

The councillor's role will vary according to the purpose and nature of the organisation and in what form his or her appointment takes. For example some appointments are as company director, or trustee, management committee member or simply as a representative without any formal powers

The advice is to be aware of your responsibilities and ensure you take advice if necessary from the appropriate person in the organisation on which you are serving, or to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer if you are in doubt. In addition, if you are invited to be a member of an organisation you can only do so in your personal capacity unless you are appointed as a representative of the County Council.

What about conflicts of interests?

Councillors should have regard to the requirements of the Council's Code of Conduct when serving on another body whether doing so in their own personal capacity or as a council representative. It is advisable to avoid appointments to organisations which are likely to raise regular conflicts with Council business, particularly where you will have to disclose a pecuniary interest in that organisation.



The Council has agreed that, whether or not an interest is a pecuniary interest, members should declare their membership of an external body at any meeting of the Council where an item relating to that organisation arises. Councillors should consult the Monitoring Officer if they have any concerns over a potential conflict of interest. In the event that a member is approached to be a chairperson, trustee or any such other position of significant responsibility, the member should consult with the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the role is compatible with the duties as a councillor. It is very important to avoid any perception of impropriety.

If you are at all worried by the administration or management of a body that you have been appointed to, in the first instance you should raise the matter with the person who appears to you to be managing the organisation. If there are matters, which might concern the Council, you can raise the matter with the Council's Monitoring Officer.

How should I prepare to represent an outside body?

Once appointed to a body, Democratic Services will notify the body and ask for details of meetings to be forwarded to you, along with any constitution/terms of reference. You should make sure you understand your role from the body and what they expect of you. Check what indemnities and insurance the organisation has to minimise/eliminate any personal liability you might incur and be sure to look closely at their accounts.

Ensure that you will receive proper notification of meetings, and look at the records of previous meetings. You must be prepared to represent the interests of the body, even though you may not agree with their decisions. Be sure to familiarise yourself of the Council's Code of Conduct requirements in full and consider the implications of your role for the Council and your elected member responsibilities. Councillors should be aware that they may not be automatically covered by the Council's legal machinery or insurance for the activities they may become involved in through membership of an outside body.

Any questions about representation should be referred to the Democratic Services Manager.

Unless otherwise stated, please direct all queries to Democratic Services at:

Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 413716

Address: Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL



Effective Chairing: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of the role of the Chair, the skills required to effectively chair a meeting and the responsibilities related to the role.

What is the chair?

The Chair is the nominated person selected to lead a committee, panel or other councillor body. The first role of the Chair is to ensure that meetings are run effectively and inclusively, in line with the agreed agenda, and to deal with the business at hand effectively. This will include preparation and follow-up, as well as taking charge during the meeting itself. Accordingly, all discussion at a meeting should be directed through the Chair. The Chair's second duty is to represent their committee, panel or body at formal and informal meetings. This includes representing the view of their member body, even if they do not agree with that view.

What skills does an effective Chair need?

An effective chair will be:

- A public spokesperson, and will be skilled in summing up other people's views and being comfortable to put these across.
- An organiser and communicator, making sure that everyone is prepared for meetings and knows when and where they are going to be and what is going to be discussed. Democratic Services Officers will support this process for most formal meetings.
- An action person, making sure that meetings are not just a 'talking shop.'
- A mediator, being able to find a compromise between two people or two conflicting ideas - being fair and not letting their own feelings get in the way.

Before the meeting

Clarify the meeting's objectives.

Ensure that the right people are invited to attend.

Ensure that all necessary documents are produced.

Check the venue is suitably set out.

Develop some contingency plans for nonattendance.

During the meeting

Create a good first impression – welcome people and clarify roles and responsibilities.

Focus on what the meeting must achieve

Establish the rules.

Steer discussions in a structured way and manage the time and personalities.

Encourage a wide variety of views and opinions.

After the meeting

Summarise key points - who will do what and by when.

Ensure the minutes record key agreements, facts etc.

Agree details for the next meeting.

Thank everyone for their contribution.

Ensure that follow up takes place, ie progress on agreed action points.

◆ Why is effective Chairing important?

Effective chairing is important because it provides clear leadership and direction by ensuring that discussions are held within a framework for debate. Good chairing will see debates that are focused and balanced, involving discussion from all of those who wish to articulate a view, particularly where conflicting viewpoints are being expressed. They will facilitate decisions being reached, allowing members to agree on the way forward and any further action that needs to be taken.

◆ What powers does the chair have?

It is the duty of any chair to conduct the meeting efficiently and effectively and at all times to act reasonably. In accordance with [the Constitution](#), the chair has full power to conduct the meeting in a way that he/she considers most expedient and to decide upon any points of procedure, subject only to statutory requirements and the council's standing orders. The decision of the chair is final on points about procedure or the conduct of the meeting. However, the chair must seek and take account of the advice of the Monitoring Officer or their nominee before coming to a decision.

Any member of the public who interrupts proceedings or acts improperly will be warned by the chair that, if their conduct continues, the Chair will request that they leave or order them to be removed from the meeting. If at any meeting there is a general disturbance making orderly conduct of business not possible, the chair may adjourn the meeting for as long as s/he believes necessary. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair, if otherwise eligible to vote, has a casting vote.

◆ What is a work programme?

A work programme is a written schedule which sets out the yearly programme of work for a member body. These are unique to the council's overview and scrutiny committees. The purpose of a work programme is to clearly identify any items of work or issues requiring further investigation which relate to the county council's services. Proper work programming will enable a member body to manage its time and resources effectively. Chairs are responsible for ensuring that their committee strikes a balance between fulfilling any statutory duties, conducting any urgent business, and allowing space to consider both high priority and day-to-day business. As a general rule, chairs should ensure that their committees focus on a few areas in detail, rather than spreading time and resources across numerous issues.

◆ What support is available?

In addition to the advice and support provided by the Democratic Services Team, training opportunities are available for members who wish to develop their chairing skills. The Local Government Association has also produced a comprehensive guide on [effective chairing](#) which will be useful, particularly for new chairs.

Unless otherwise stated, please direct all queries to Democratic Services at:

Email: Ldemocraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 413716

Address: Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RR

Media Engagement: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of Warwickshire County Council's Media Relations Protocol and advice regarding speaking to the media.

Can I talk to the media?

Yes. In a democracy, the media is a vital mechanism for ensuring the transparency of local political decision-making and for holding councils and elected members to account. A managed relationship with the media ensures that we are all fairly represented and that the public are given an accurate portrayal of the facts. Councillors are entitled to talk to the media concerning council business, but they must:

- 1) Not disclose any confidential and exempt information
- 2) Not breach the terms of the Council's Code of Conduct.
- 3) Make clear that any personal political views are that of their own and not necessarily representative of the Council as a whole.
- 4) Act in accordance with the [Data Protection Act](#) and the Council's access to information procedures.

Any member who wishes to put forward their personal political views in a news release should use services independent of the Council and should not seek to use the services of officers for this purpose.

What media facilities does the council have?

Warwickshire County Council has its own in house Communications Team, which support councillors and officers in launch events, drafting press releases and liaising with other media outlets on their behalf. They also manage the council's online social media profile. [Warwickshire News](#) is the Council's public facing media platform which provides residents with the latest news and information regarding council services. It also provides visitors with the option to view news stories from each of the five district and borough areas.

What is the procedure for speaking to the media?

The majority of calls and requests will come directly to the Communications Team. Every media request is logged which allows the council to keep a record of what has been asked and what has been said and by whom. Staff are asked to direct all media calls to the Communications team who will then log and action the appropriate response.

Quotes on behalf of the Council will, in the majority of cases, be given by councillors. Cabinet members, group leaders and overview and scrutiny chairs may all be called upon to comment on specific areas of council work. In-house training is available for those who have regular contact with the media.

What Advice is available for dealing with the media?

Where possible, all media opportunities (news releases, interviews, features, conferences) should amplify the Council's key messages. The LGA offers tips for handling the media in their publication [LGA Media and Communications Councillor Workbook](#). Some of their recommendations for councillors include:

- Don't respond to press calls out of the blue – ask for background and the deadline – then respond after consulting your Communication Team.
- Identify key messages and good quotations that can be presented to the media;
- Don't point the finger, complain or consistently say 'no comment' – you may get a bad reputation;
- Build a long-term relationship with the media;
- Don't use jargon, council-speak or inflammatory words – these might come back to haunt you. This includes what you say on social media;
- Have a consistent approach to media handling – be honest, concise and helpful.

Can I use Social Media?

Yes. Social media is one of the many channels used by the Communications Team and Warwickshire County Council as a whole to communicate with the public; to consult and engage; and to be more transparent and accountable. It enables us to be more active in our relationships with residents, partners and stakeholders and encourages people to be involved in local decision making.

With almost all UK councils using at least one Twitter and Facebook account, the argument over whether to use social media across local government has long since passed. Councillors are able to use their own social media networks to promote the council's work and communicate with residents. However, when posting matters on social media, the procedures set out in this short guide should be observed alongside the council's Code of Conduct.

Where can I find more information on using social media?

More information and guides can be found via the following links -

[LGA Social Media Hub](#)
[LGA Social Media Strategy](#)
[WCC Social Media Policy](#)

Unless otherwise stated, please direct all queries to Democratic Services at:
Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 413716
Address: Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL

Meetings of Full Council: The Essentials

Overview - This short guide provides an overview of how meetings of Full Council operate, and what rules and procedures govern the conduct of the meeting.

What is the purpose of Full Council meetings?

The whole Council (all 57 county councillors) meet together to agree the key policies of the Council, the annual budget and to set the local council tax. Council meetings provide councillors with the opportunity to raise issues for debate on matters of significant public interest, which the council is able to influence. Full Council is also responsible for electing a Leader, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council. These meetings provide an opportunity for members of the public to present petitions and for elected members to ask questions of the Leader and their Cabinet. Full Council meets at least six times a year, and will occasionally hold extraordinary meetings to deal with urgent matters that require Full Council consideration. The agenda for ordinary meetings of council will include:

- approval of the minutes of the last meeting;
- any announcements from the Chair, Leader, Cabinet or Joint Managing Directors;
- any reports from the Leader, Cabinet, committees or chief officers;
- petitions from the public (they must contain at least 1000 signatures);
- any motions submitted in advance from councillors;
- Member Question Time.

What are the rules of debate?

Debate at Council is always directed through the Chair, and in accordance with the procedures (standing orders) in the [Constitution](#). Key points to remember are:

- If a member wishes to speak, they must indicate to the Chair by raising their hand any time during the debate, and wait to be called to speak;
- Members must stand when addressing the meeting (unless unable to do so);
- Members may speak for a maximum of five minutes, with the exception being the February budget setting meeting or with the consent of the Chair.
- Members may only speak once in a debate, unless they are a mover of a motion or amendment who may have a right of reply in the debate.
- Speeches should be relevant to the business on the agenda.
- The Chair's ruling on points of procedure is final.

What are points of order?

A point of order can be raised by any member at any time to highlight a potential breach in the Constitution's standing orders or the law. The member who raises a point of order must cite the rule or law and the way in which he/she considers it has been broken. A member may also at any time make a personal explanation, where they feel that part of their earlier speech has been misunderstood or misinterpreted.

What is Elected Member Question Time?

Up to one hour is allocated for members to ask questions. There two types of question:

- Questions under notice - These are submitted at least 5 clear working days before the meeting and can be addressed to the Leader, Cabinet Portfolio Holders or Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs. The questioner and one other member may ask a supplementary. Questions are circulated to all members before the meeting.
- Questions without notice –These can be put to the Leader or Cabinet Portfolio Holders at the meeting, but it is still advisable to give notice as soon as possible so that an informed response may be given. No supplementaries are allowed.

If an answer cannot be given at the meeting, a written answer will be circulated with the minutes after the meeting. The Chair has discretion to reject unsuitable questions.

How do I prepare for a meeting of Full Council?

Members will receive an email with a link to the agenda and reports when it is published on the Council website 5 clear working days before the meeting. A printed copy will follow in the post. It is important that members read the agenda and reports as Council decisions will be based on this information. If there are any points of clarification, members are encouraged to contact the report author before the meeting. It is common for political groups to meet a day or two before and/or on the day of the Council meeting to discuss the agenda.

What is a motion?

This is the term used for a proposal put forward by a councillor for debate and decision at a Council meeting. It is an effective method for seeking action on issues that have an impact across the County. Key points to remember are:

- The motion should be concise and state clearly the action the Council should take. Good starting points are 'That the Council...' or 'This Council believes...'
- The motion should not seek agreement to an action or change in policy without ensuring the usual robust decision making process has been undertaken (i.e. an officer report with full information, options and expert advice). Motions that seek a change in policy will normally request that officers or the Cabinet report back.
- The motion must relate to council services or something that the Council can influence. For example the expression of opinion on foreign affairs would not be appropriate for debate, but commenting on national affairs such as large railway schemes might be.
- Motions will be rejected if libellous, offensive or inaccurate.
- Notice of a motion must be submitted 10 clear working days before a Council meeting. However, members are encouraged to submit these as early as possible to the Democratic Services Manager and to seek advice on appropriate wording.

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Warwickshire
County Council

Warwickshire County Council

Public Engagement Protocol

2017/18

Overview - This protocol has been established to provide guidance on the ways in which members of the public can engage with the work of the Council. This protocol covers provisions for: public speaking, petitions, filming and social media, access to information and other ways to get involved with the council.

PUBLIC SPEAKING SCHEME

Can I speak at Council meetings?

Members of the public who live or work in Warwickshire are entitled to speak at meetings of Cabinet, Council or Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to items on the agenda of that meeting or in presenting petitions. Specifically for Overview and Scrutiny Committees, members of the public may also raise issues that are not on the agenda and may ask questions. There is separate guidance overleaf for speaking at the council's Regulatory Committee. In all aspects of the public speaking scheme, the chair has the discretion to vary procedures as he/she considers appropriate.

What are the eligibility requirements?

There are certain eligibility requirements that apply to speaking at the council's meetings. The chair will reject any question that has already been answered, is not relevant to the business of the meeting, or he/she considers unsuitable. A member of the public, for the purposes of this protocol, does not include any:

- employee of the council, or representative of that employee(s), in relation to matters connected with his/her employment;
- representative of an employee of the council or group of such employees;
- person in a contractual relationship with the council in relation to any matter connected with that contract;
- member of any local authority on a matter concerning that authority;
- person who is an applicant for a consent, approval, permission, licence or similar decision given by the council;
- person intending to refer to any confidential or exempt matters; or
- person who is engaged professionally to speak on behalf of another.

How long will I have to speak?

Each person will be allowed a maximum of three minutes in which to speak (five minutes if presenting a petition), and speakers should ensure that their comments relate to the remit of the meeting they are speaking at. The public speaking session is limited to a maximum of thirty minutes. Where a number of speakers representing a particular organisation wish to speak on related matters, the chair may limit the number of speakers as he/she considers appropriate.

Do I need to give notice?

Members of the public must provide the Democratic Services Manager with written notice that they wish to speak on a particular matter at least 3 working days before the meeting. The same applies for any questions to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which must be sent to the Democratic Services Manager at least 3 working days before the meeting. The speaker/questioner must provide their name and address, and the date of the meeting at which they wish to speak or put a question.

Can I expect an answer at the meeting?

If the subject is on the agenda for the meeting, the speaker will be allowed to put their view before the councillors debate the item and come to a conclusion at the meeting. Questions on issues that are not on the agenda may be answered at the meeting, but if this is not possible, then a written answer will be given as soon as possible after the meeting. All written answers given following the meeting will be circulated to all members of the body and, unless the contents would involve disclosing exempt or confidential information, will be made public.

Can I speak at a Regulatory Committee meeting?

The Regulatory Committee has a specific public speaking scheme which stands separate to the council's general public speaking scheme. This provision applies to applications for planning permission and approvals under planning conditions. Councillors, objectors, supporters and the applicant will be entitled to speak, subject to the provisions below.

It is important to register your interest to speak with the Democratic Services Team at the earliest convenience, as no more than three objectors and three supporters may speak on any application. Each speaker will have a maximum of three minutes and all speakers will be sent written notification of the decision of the committee. If the committee defers an application to obtain further information or to visit the site, speakers will be allowed to speak when the application is next considered only:

- If they spoke at the first meeting.
- To address any new information which has emerged since the last meeting.

Further details on the public speaking procedure rules can be found in the [Constitution](#).

PETITIONS SCHEME

Does the council accept petitions?

Anyone who lives or works in Warwickshire, including those under 18 years old, can sign or organise a petition. Any petition must relate to the provision of services that the County Council has responsibility for, e.g. local libraries, road safety or other local services where the Council might be able to exercise influence over the decision-makers. The Council has an e-petition facility on its [website](#) but paper petitions are also accepted. Petitions (or requests to set up e-petitions) will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days and advice on how the petition will be responded to.

How many signatures do I need?

Petitions containing 50 or more signatories will be referred to Cabinet or a Cabinet Member to respond. Those with 1000 or more signatories have an additional right for the lead petitioner, or nominated representative, to speak and present the petition at a meeting of Full Council. If you wish to present your petition to a particular meeting of the Council you should ensure your petition is submitted 10 working days before the meeting. This is to ensure there is time to check that the petition meets our requirements and arrange for the petition to be included on the agenda of the meeting. If there is more than one petition supporting the same outcome on a particular matter, the petition organiser of the first petition received will be invited to address the relevant meeting.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition may include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition;
- writing to the lead petitioner setting out our views about the petition;
- holding a meeting with petitioners;
- holding a consultation;
- referring the petition for consideration to a councillor or community meeting;
- referring the petition to another local public service organisation.

What should a petition contain?

Petitions must include a clear and concise statement explaining what action you wish the council to take, accompanied with the contact details and address for the lead petitioner. The lead petitioner is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website. Everyone who signs a petition must provide an address and post code so that we are able to check the validity of signatures but these details are not placed on the website.

What should a petition not contain?

Where petitions do not relate to the responsibilities of the council, the petition will either be redirected to the appropriate authority, or returned to the lead petitioner. Petitions which the Democratic Services Manager considers to be vexatious, rude, offensive, defamatory, abusive, time wasting or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. A repeat petition will not normally be considered where they are received within six months of one another.

Are any petitions exempt from this scheme?

Where a petition relates to a planning or licensing application to be decided by the County Council, it will be presented to our Regulatory Committee at the meeting which is considering the application. The lead petitioner may speak for up to 3 minutes in accordance with public speaking scheme. The County Council mainly deals with applications relating to minerals and waste management. The majority of planning and licensing applications are dealt with by the relevant District or Borough Councils in Warwickshire. Petitions relating to current council consultations will be referred to the officers managing the consultation so that the views of the petitioners can be assessed alongside other responses in the consultation.

There are particular statutory requirements relating to petitions which request a referendum on whether or not the Council should adopt different political management arrangements, such as having a directly elected mayor. The minimum number of signatories for this is 5% of the local government electorate (21,263 in 2017). In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.

Does the Council accept E-petitions?

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. You will need to decide how long you want your petition to be open for signatures but it must not exceed 3 months. When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online because we have to check that the content is suitable before it is made available for signature. When an e-petition has closed, it will automatically be submitted to the Democratic Services Team.

How do I sign an E-petition?

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed but your contact details will not be visible.

FILMING AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL



Can I record a council meeting?

Any member of the public may report on the meeting using any communication method (including filming, audio recording and social media). Any person who wishes to film or record a meeting is encouraged to contact the Democratic Services Team at least 24 hours before the meeting so that arrangements can be made to accommodate them, and so that notice can be given to other attendees.

Are there any limits on recording?

The principle is that the proceedings of the meeting concerned should not be disrupted by the use of media tools and it is a matter for the chair to determine on the day what he/she considers appropriate. Any recording must respect the wishes of members of the public and the chair will have discretion to terminate or suspend recording at any time if continuation would prejudice the conduct of the meeting. Recordings should be of sufficient quality so that listeners or viewers cannot misunderstand, misconstrue or be misinformed as a result of a poor quality broadcast.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION



What information can I access?

The council publishes agendas, minutes, decisions and reports for all of its formal bodies such as council, cabinet and committee meetings. These can be accessed through the council's [Committee Management Information System](#). The council may exclude access by the public to reports which relates to exempt or confidential matters.

What is Confidential and Exempt Information?

Confidential information means information given to the council by a government department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed under court order. Exempt information means information falling within the seven categories set out in the Constitution, which broadly includes; information pertaining to an individual, information protected under certain legal and contractual obligations, and information relating to any action in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Can I be excluded from a meeting?

A member of the public who interrupts proceedings will be warned by the chair that, if their conduct continues, the chair will request or order that they leave the meeting. The public will also be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely that confidential or exempt information would be disclosed. For this reason exempt or confidential items are clearly indicated on agendas and are usually taken as the last business.

GETTING INVOLVED

How else can I get involved in the work of the council?

The council runs extensive consultations concerning a variety of locally provided services and welcomes the public's input to help shape the future provision of services. You can follow the council on [Twitter](#), which features regular news and updates for Warwickshire residents. You can also keep up to date with decisions being made at the council by following the [Democracy Blog](#).

Your local councillor is elected to represent you, and you should engage with them to ensure that your views are represented. You can find out who your local councillor is by visiting the councils [Committee Management Information System](#). It may be that you have a good idea for improving services, or want an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the work of a specific service area.

From time to time, opportunities arise for members of the public to be appointed as co-opted or independent members of certain bodies. This could include being part of the panel that reviews the provision of member's expenses or being involved with appeal panels. Any vacancies will be promoted on the councils twitter page.

Unless otherwise stated, please submit all questions, petitions, notices of public speaking and/or filming to the Democratic Services Team at:

Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk **Tel:** 01926 413716

Address: Democratic Services, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL