

Public Speaking at Fire Authority Meetings

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority welcomes and encourages the input and contribution of representatives of voluntary and other external organisations, including businesses, and the wider public in order to deliver greater improvement and accountability across its services. One way of enabling this to happen is to provide an opportunity for members of the public to speak at meetings of the Fire Authority. While we need to make sure that meetings can be run effectively we also want to ensure that it is as straightforward as possible for people to have their say so that anyone with a point to make can do so.

With this in mind we have introduced a simple guide for how this will work in practice and this is laid out below. This process does not apply to employees of the Authority except when acting as Trades Union representatives or private individuals, as they have sufficient channels of communication, both internally and through their representative bodies.

For the purposes of this guide a “member of the public” is defined simply as anyone who lives or works in Cambridgeshire or is affected by a decision made in Cambridgeshire.

The full schedule of all meetings and agenda can be found on the Fire Authority’s website:

http://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/fireauthority/fa_meetings.php

1. Request for Public Speaking at Fire Authority Meetings

Any member of the public who wishes to speak at a Fire Authority meeting is asked to make a request in writing no later than 12.00 noon three working days before the meeting. Any request should be in writing either via email or letter to Michelle Rowe, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Democratic and Members' Services, RES 1102, Cambridgeshire County Council, Room 114a, Shire Hall, Cambridge CB3 0AP or michelle.rowe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk and provide the following details:

- **Name, address and contact details** of the person making a comment or asking a question
- **Details of the request to speak:** If you wish to ask a question, the full text of the question needs to be provided. If you wish to make a comment about a matter on the agenda, a list of the main points is required.

(Requests to speak received after the three day deadline may be permitted, at the discretion of the Authority’s Chairman).

All questions and comments should be clear, concise and relevant to the agenda of the meeting. The time allowed for comments and questions is three minutes per speaker. Only one question or comment may be allowed

per speaker. A request for public speaking might be refused if the questions or comment is defamatory, vexatious, discriminatory or contains offensive language. If a comment or question is not relevant to the agenda items of the meeting, it will not be allowed for public speaking. Requests to speak cannot be accepted if they require the disclosure of confidential information.

2. Participating in the Fire Authority Meeting

If registered to speak, you should arrive at the venue (usually Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters) at least 15 Minutes before the start of the meeting and report to the Democratic Services Officer present. The register of speakers will be kept by Democratic Services and provided to the Chairman in advance of the meeting. No more than three speakers will normally be permitted per subject at a meeting (subject to the Chairman's discretion).

When the meeting reaches the agenda item, the Chairman will ask you to speak. You should behave appropriately for the nature of the meeting, show courtesy and respect to everyone present. You should not make any remarks, which are offensive, defamatory, insulting or discriminatory. The time limited to pose a question or make a comment will be three minutes for each speaker. The Democratic Services Officer will time each speaker to ensure that he/she does not exceed three minutes. You must cease speaking when so instructed by the Chairman. The Chairman may allow questions from the Authority members to the speaker for clarification only.

The Chairman will deal with the question or statement or request that an appropriate Member or Officer reply orally. If this is not possible, you will be provided with a written answer using the contact details provided within five working days.

If there should be a large number of requests for public speaking regarding one or more items on the agenda, the Chairman may take steps to ensure that the meeting can be conducted in an appropriate fashion; for example, move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting or limit the number of speakers. If the Chairman should decide to limit the number of speakers, the Democratic Services Officer will ensure that all steps are taken to inform the "unsuccessful" speakers in advance and a written reply will be sent within five working days after the meeting.