

Summary of the Scheme of Public Participation for Virtual Meetings (referred to as “VMs”)

The public cannot physically “attend” a VM.

H.M. Government has recently changed the public’s legal right to attend meetings into a right to hear, by means of technology, the Councillors attending the VM remotely.

Written notice of a wish to speak (by means of the procedure below) **at a VM must be given, either to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk or on the Council’s website at <https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/committeesystem/haveyoursay.aspx>, by 15:00 hours on the second working day before the VM.**

Hence, for example, for VMs of the Planning Committee on Wednesdays:-

- (i) If there is no Bank Holiday on the Monday preceding the VM, written notice must be given by 15:00 hours on the Monday.
- (ii) If there is a Bank Holiday on the Monday preceding the VM, written notice must be given by 15:00 hours on the Friday preceding the VM.
- (iii) If the VM immediately follows the Easter Weekend, written notice must be given by 15:00 hours on Maundy Thursday.

Registering to speak at a VM confers **the right to submit a speech** as follows:-

- (i) on a first-come, first-served basis, one speech in support of, and one speech against, an item for decision, or
- (ii) as a duly-authorised representative of a Parish Council¹ or Community Forum affected by an item for decision.

Those registered to speak must submit to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk, by 10:00 hours on the day of the VM, a copy of their speech in written, legible English. It should be no longer than 400 words, on a single side of A4 paper, printed in 12-point non-italic sans-serif font (e.g. Arial). Any text above 400 words will not be read out.

Speeches received as above will be read to the VM by a competent Officer for and on behalf of the speakers, at the normal times and in the normal order during the VM (subject to the Chairman’s normal discretion).

IMPORTANT:

An Officer reading any speech on behalf of any speaker shall have discretion to omit/edit out any inappropriate language, information or statements.

If any defamation, insult, personal or confidential information, etc. is contained in any speech received from any speaker, and/or is read to the VM by an Officer, each speaker accepts by submitting their speech to be fully responsible for all consequences thereof and to indemnify the Officer and the Council accordingly.

¹ The term “Parish Council” includes Town Councils and Community Councils