A Customer Guide:
Public Speaking at Planning Committee.

This guide sets out in detail, the procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee meetings and should be read in conjunction with the associated publication **'The Planning Committee – How it works'** which sets out how the meeting is managed.

Before the Committee makes a decision about a planning application, you can make a request to speak for or against an application at the meeting. Any such request to speak must be made in advance of the meeting but you should be aware that due to the limited time available for public speaking you may not necessarily be allowed to speak.

Who can speak at the Planning Committee meeting?

Members of the public who are supporting or objecting to a proposal which is the subject of a planning application can make a request to address the Committee. Ward, Parish, Town, and County Councillors representing the ward or parish within which the application site lies may also address the Committee under the provisions of this guidance. In addition, the Ward councillor representing an adjoining ward, who has called the application in, can address the Committee under the provisions of the guidance. A Ward, adjoining Ward Parish, Town, or County Councillor may speak only once and cannot speak as a representative of more than one body. The applicant and/or agent (which can include any person employed or engaged by the applicant to support the application) may also address the Committee to put their case, or to reply to matters raised by other speakers. Speakers may only speak in relation to applications for planning permission and not in relation to any other report presented to the Planning Committee for consideration, including any proposals relating to Tree Preservation Orders.

How much time is allowed?

Each speaker will have a maximum of 3 minutes. The time will be controlled by the Chairman and by a 'traffic light' system operated by the Committee Clerk.

Objectors will have a maximum of 12 minutes in total, supporters will have 12 minutes in total, Ward, adjoining Ward, Parish or Town and County Councillors will have 3 minutes each.

The applicant may speak for 3 minutes but if the applicant does not wish to speak, the applicant may instead nominate another person to speak in substitution on their behalf for 3 minutes.

In addition, the applicant's planning or other agent may also speak for 3 minutes.

An individual may only speak for a maximum of 3 minutes.

How many people are allowed to speak?

In circumstances where there are several members of the public who wish to speak either as objectors or supporters of an application, it is recommended that a few spokespersons should be nominated to speak. In any event, no individual may speak for more than 3 minutes unless under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Chairman.

Only one Parish or Town Councillor, one adjoining Ward Councillor (if they called in the application) and one County Councillor, may speak.

Where a ward in Wyre is represented by more than one councillor, each of those councillors will be able to speak on an application if they wish, i.e. up to three Wyre Councillors representing the ward in which the application site is located. Where there is no Wyre Ward Councillor available or wishing to speak under the provisions of this scheme, a member of the Planning Committee who is also a member for the ward within which the application site lies may, if they wish, speak as a Ward Councillor but would then be limited to 3 minutes and thereafter would not be able to take part in the debate as a member of the Planning Committee and would not be able to vote on that item.

Will I be asked questions by the committee?

Possibly yes, members of the Committee may ask you questions of clarification on factual matters after you have finished speaking.

What do I have to do to register a request to speak?

If you wish to speak, you must register a request to speak with the Council's Democratic Services Team (Democratic.Services@wyre.gov.uk or Tel 01253 887608) no later than 24 hours before the start of the meeting. Any requests to speak received after the deadline will not be accepted except under exceptional circumstances at the Chairman's discretion.

Not more than one person per household may register to speak and any person registering to speak must confirm that they will be available on the day of the meeting. Unless there are exceptional circumstances (and at the Chairman's discretion) speakers may not use proxies to speak or read out statements on their behalf.

The requirement to pre-register also applies to applicants and/or agents.

Ward, Parish, Town, or County Councillors do not need to register their intention to speak in advance.

Important Note:
Once you have registered your request to speak, it is your responsibility to check with the Committee Clerk whether others have also made such a request. Where you are one of several speakers wishing to speak on an item you are advised to agree amongst yourselves in advance of the meeting who will speak, given the limited time available. If no agreement is reached, then those who registered their request to speak first will be permitted to speak.

Can I hand out letters/photographs etc. to the Members of the Committee or display material for them to see?

No. The procedure allows you to speak to the Committee, but when addressing the committee under this procedure no material or information may be displayed or circulated to the Committee Members. This is because Councillors may not be able to give proper consideration to the new information and officers may not be able to check for accuracy or provide considered advice on any material considerations arising. It may also result in delays to the proceedings.

Messages should never be passed to individual committee members, either from other councillors or from the public. This could be seen as seeking to influence that member improperly and will create a perception of bias that will be difficult to overcome.

Additional Help

The Council is committed to ensuring equality of access to the public speaking process. Individuals who have a disability or do not speak English as their first language or have some other appropriate need (for example require an interpreter/spokesperson) should contact the Council's Democratic Services Team (Democratic.Services@wyre.gov.uk or Tel 01253 887608) and reasonable adjustments will be made to assist which may include extending the timescales for speaking, accepting late registration to speak and/ or accepting the nomination of a spokesperson.

What is the procedure?

1. The application will be introduced by the Chairman.

2. If there is an update from the Head of Planning Services requesting the deferment of the application, the Chairman will ask the Committee to consider this request without any public speaking. If the motion to defer the application is carried, the Chairman will move on to the next item, otherwise he will move to the next stage as set out below.

3. The Chairman will introduce the item stating whether or not the members of the Committee have visited the site.

4. Where no site visit has been necessary, the Development Manager will then play any video showing the site and will display the relevant plans.

5. The order in which the Chairman will call the public to speak will be:
– Those objecting to the application
– Those supporting the application
– Local Parish or Town Council Member
– Wyre Ward Councillors
– The Adjoining Ward Councillor (if they called in the application)
– A County Councillor
– The applicant and/or agent for the application

6. After each person has spoken the Members of the Committee may ask the speaker questions of clarification on factual matters only.

7. The Committee will then debate the application without further public involvement under the direction of the Chairman. The Chairman may also invite the Head of Planning Services to comment on matters raised or respond to questions as appropriate during or at the end of the debate.

8. The Committee will then reach a decision by voting on any properly tabled recommendation/ motion.

9. After each decision the Chairman will inform the meeting of the decision.

Notes:

1. If, during the debate of an item by the Committee (point 7 above), there is a motion to defer the application which is carried, when the application is brought back to the Committee, there shall be no further opportunities for the public or non-committee members to speak, unless the deferral has resulted in additional information or revised plans upon which there has been further publicity and/or consultation.

2. Representations should be limited to planning considerations only as members of the Planning Committee can only take into account relevant planning matters. Matters that cannot be taken into account include:
   a. land ownership/boundary disputes
   b. covenants/ private rights in relation to land
   c. commercial competition between businesses
   d. Loss of view
   e. Personal circumstances of the applicant
   f. Potential alternative sites for the development
   g. Potential future development proposals
   h. Effect of development on property value
   i. Matters controlled under other non-planning legislation

3. The Chairman in liaison with officers will be responsible for continuing to ensure there is equality of access to the public speaking process and time limits for

speaking can be extended, late registration to speak accepted and/or spokespersons nominated in appropriate circumstances. See paragraph Additional Help for further detail.