

Are you coming to speak to Council?

Things you need to know to help you understand the Council process



It can be quite daunting coming to speak to Council, especially if it's your first time, but there's a few things you need to know that will help you understand the Council process.

If you are speaking at a Council or Committee meeting, this will happen during the public forum, petitions and deputation section of the agenda. If you're not sure of anything there's always a friendly staff member around to ask or you can give us a call with any questions prior to the meeting.

Purpose

The purpose of this item on the agenda is to provide an opportunity for members of the public to convey concerns, make suggestions to and have input/consult with the Council.

In the case where a committee or subcommittee is to be addressed, any issue, idea or matter raised in the public forum must fall within the terms of reference of that body.

Procedure

The guidelines/procedures for Council dealing with public forum, deputations and presentations, and petitions, are set out in this information sheet, and are governed by Council's Standing Orders (which are available on our website – www.es.govt.nz).

Staff Assistance

Staff will be available to give advice and assist speakers with their presentations by providing aids such as maps, photocopying information to be circulated, and if required, providing access to PowerPoint projection systems.

Public Forum

The Council will provide a total of up to 30 minutes at the commencement of each Council or Committee meeting, for members of the public to address the meeting.

Applications to speak to any meeting must be lodged with the Chief Executive (preferably in writing) not less than one clear day prior to the meeting at which the person wishes to speak. The application should include the person's name, address, contact details, the subject of the address and the meeting to which the person wishes to speak.

Although up to 30 minutes is provided for this section, only five minutes for each speaker or group will be allocated. No more than two speakers per group may speak to the topic at hand.

The Chairperson has the discretion to decline to hear a speaker, or to terminate a presentation at any time where:

- a speaker is repeating views presented by an earlier speaker at the same public forum;
- the speaker is criticising elected members and/or staff;
- the speaker is being repetitious, disrespectful or offensive;
- the speaker has previously spoken on the same issue;
- the matter is subject to legal proceedings;
- the matter is subject to a hearing, including the hearing of submissions where the local authority or committee sits in a quasi-judicial capacity.

Councillors may wish to question the speaker for clarification, but debate will not be entered into. Speakers are not permitted to question councillors, although they can submit questions in writing.

Following the public forum, no debate or decisions will be made at the meeting on issues raised during the forum, unless related to items already on the agenda.

Deputations and Presentations

Deputations may be received by Council or any of its committees. Deputations are to be approved by the Chairperson or the Chief Executive. Deputations may be heard at the commencement of the meeting or at the time that the relevant agenda item is being considered.

You need to follow the same process to make an application to speak as you would for a Public Forum and time limits are also the same.

Any debate on a matter raised in a deputation must occur at the time at which the matter is scheduled to be discussed on the meeting agenda, and once a motion has been moved and seconded.

Petitions

Petitions presented to Council or any of its committees must contain at least 20 signatures and consist of fewer than 150 words (not including the signatories). They must be received by the Chief Executive at least five working days before the date of the meeting at which they will be presented.

Petitions must not be disrespectful, use offensive language or include malicious statements. They may be written in English or te reo Maori. Petitioners planning to present their petition in te reo or sign language should advise the Chief Executive in time to allow translation services to be arranged.

A petitioner who presents a petition to Council, or any of its committees or subcommittees, may speak for five minutes (excluding questions) about the petition, unless the meeting resolves otherwise. The Chairperson will terminate the presentation of the petition if he/she believes the petitioner is being disrespectful, offensive or making malicious statements.

Where a petition is presented as part of a deputation or public forum, the speaking time limits relating to public forums will apply.

Members may present petitions on behalf of petitioners. In doing so, members must confine themselves to presenting:

- the petition
- the petitioners' statement, and
- the number of signatures.

Please note

Council meetings may be livestreamed to Facebook, including public presentations and deputations. Meeting content also becomes a public record and is available on our website.

Media may be present during the meeting and may take photos/videos of anybody presenting. They may also approach you for further comment and/or photos and video. It is your choice whether you wish to engage with media after what has been presented in the public forum.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch on 0800 76 88 45.