

Summary of Public Rights

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with Cockermonth Town Council. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others have been agreed by the Town Council.

Citizens have the right to:-

- Vote at local elections if they are registered to do so
- Contact their local Councillor about any matters of concern to them
- Attend meetings of the Town Council except where for example personal or confidential matters are being discussed
- Participate in the Council's question time
- Present a petition
- Inspect and obtain copies of reports and background papers and any record of decisions made by the Council
- Complain to the Council under its complaints scheme
- Complain to the Monitoring Officer of Allerdale Borough Council should a Member of the Town Council breach the Members Code of Conduct
- Inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor
- Inspect and obtain copies of any recorded information held by the Council (subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000)

Cockermonth Town Council welcomes participation by its citizens in its work.

Rights to attend Meetings

Members of the public may attend all meetings subject only to specific exceptions where for example personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

Town Council meetings are held monthly, dates are available via the Council's website cockermonth-tc@co-net.com *www-cockermonth.org*

Notices of Meetings

The Council will give at least 3 clear days notice before any meeting by posting details of the meeting at the Council's offices in the Town Hall, Market Place, Cockermonth.

Access to agenda and reports before the meeting

The Council will make copies of the agenda and reports open to the public available for inspection at The Town Hall, Market Place, Cockermouth at least 3 clear days before the meeting.

Supply of Copies

The Council will supply copies of:-

- (a) Any Agenda
- (b) Any report
- (c) Any background paper

To any person either free of charge via email (if available) or upon payment of a charge for photocopying and postage.

Access to the minutes etc after the meeting

The Council will make available draft copies of minutes available within 5 working days of the meeting. These can be obtained by contacting the Town Clerk, Mrs Sheila Brown on 01900 821869.

Please note that copies of approved minutes from May 2008 are available via the Councils website.

Background Papers

The Town Clerk will set out in every report a list of those documents (called background papers) relating to the subject matter of the report which in her opinion:

- (a) Disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based and
- (b) Which have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report.

Published works or those documents which disclose exempt or confidential information will not be included.

Presenting a Petition

Any elector of Cockermouth Parish may present a petition to a meeting of the Town Council if it relates to something which affects the functions, inhabitants, or area of the Authority and is signed by people who are not councillors.

An elector must notify the Town Clerk of their intention to present a petition at least two working days before the meeting at which it will be presented.

Each petitioner or deputation will be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes. The presentation will be limited to reading out or summarising the purpose of the petition, stating the number and description of the signatories and making any relevant supporting remarks as the petitioner thinks fit.

Petitions will be presented in the order in which they are received by the Town Clerk.

Submitting a Question

Any elector of Cokermonth Parish may ask a question of the Town Council on any matter which the Town Council has powers (one per Council meeting).

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or via email to the Town Clerk no later than 2 days before the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner.

Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor may group similar questions together.

The Town Clerk may reject a question if it:-

- (a) It is not about a matter for which the Town Council has responsibility or which affects the Town
- (b) Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive
- (c) Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Town Council in the last 6 months; or
- (d) Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information

Asking the Question at the Meeting

The Mayor will invite the questioner to put the question to the Town Council. If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the Mayor to put the question on their behalf. The Mayor may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply will be given or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question be not dealt with.

All questions will be put and may be debated by the Town Council.

The person asking the question has a right of reply at the end of the debate for up to five minutes.

Public Question Time will be limited so that no further questions may be put after thirty minutes from the start of the first question.

Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time either because of lack of time or because it requires a technical answer will be dealt with by written answer.

Summary of Public Rights

A written summary of the public's rights to attend meetings and inspect and copy documents will be kept at the Town Hall, Market Place, Cockermouth and will be made available to the public on the Councils web site.

Freedom of Information Act

A written summary of the Town Council's publication scheme is kept at the Town Hall, Market Place, Cockermouth and is also available to members of the public on the Councils web site.