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25.23 PROVISION FOR THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Source : Council Meeting 28/6/06

Purpose of the Public Forum

The Council has been holding a forum at the start of all ordinary public Council meetings to give members of the community an opportunity to come along and speak to the Council. This is a reflection of the Council's desire to see more public participation in decision making and meeting procedures.

The forum allows members of the community to address Council on any subject that they believe the Council may have some influence over.

Registration of Interest to Speak at the Public Forum

It is preferable that members of the public register their interest to speak at the public forum by contacting Linda Pablecheque on 788 9111 ext 842 at least two days prior to the meeting.

This will enable the Chairman to determine how much time may be required for the forum, as well as ensuring that any research of the subject matter that is required can be undertaken.

Time Limit of Public Forum

The public forum will run for 30 minutes in total. Each speaker is allocated a maximum of 10 minutes.

The chairperson may allow at his/her discretion to extend the period any person is allowed to speak.

Conduct at Public Forum

The order of speakers will be decided by the Chairman. Speakers will be required to identify themselves and advise the subject matter they wish to speak on. They will also need to indicate whether they are speaking on behalf of a group or an organisation or as an individual.

If a speaker is speaking to a written submission that has been previously circulated to Council, that submission may be taken as read. In order to make the best use of the

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available time, the speaker should use the opportunity to emphasise or highlight any salient points rather than reading the submission.

Speakers will be afforded the opportunity to speak without interruption for a maximum period of 10 minutes unless the Chairman interrupts the speaker to warn them about either inappropriate conduct or speaking beyond the allotted time.

Council meetings are conducted in accordance with Standing Orders. Elected members are subject to a Code of Conduct and are required to adhere to that code.

Speakers at the Public Forum will be afforded common courtesy and it is expected that this will be reciprocated.

If the speaker's conduct is considered unacceptable in the view of the Chairman, the Chairman may request the speaker to withdraw any remark, cease speaking or in extreme circumstances request the removal of the speaker from the meeting.

Unacceptable conduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Swearing
- Offensive gestures
- Racial, ethnic, sexual or cultural slurs
- Threats
- Inflammatory language

Should a member of the public have concerns about the behaviour, conduct or performance of either elected members or Council staff, they should raise this matter with either the Mayor or the Chief Executive at an appropriate occasion.

The public forum is not the place for a person to enter into a debate with Council or to make personal attacks against elected members or Council staff.

At the conclusion of the speaker's submission, the Chairman will ask other councillors or committee members whether they wish to ask questions of clarification of the speaker.

The speaker may answer these questions of clarification posed by councillors or committee members but may not pose their own questions to councillors or committee members or enter into a debate. The Chairman will also ensure that councillors or committee members do not attempt to debate with the speaker.

If a speaker speaks to an item on the agenda, the Chairman may choose to bring that item forward on the agenda to allow speakers at the Public Forum to listen to the debate on that item.

No speaker or member of the public has speaking rights outside the public forum and may not attempt to participate in the debate.

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The Council has an agenda item to allow it to discuss and determine what response, if any, will be made to speakers at the public forum.

Deputations and Presentations

Deputations may be received by the Council provided an application for admission setting forth the subject, has been lodged with the Chief Executive at least two working days before the date of the meeting, and has been subsequently approved by the Chairperson. The Chairperson may refuse requests for deputations which are repetitious or offensive.

Procedures for deputations and presentations will be in accordance with the New Zealand Standard - Model Standing Orders for Meeting of Local Authorities and Community Boards (NZS 9202:2003)