

## **MAKING MEETINGS ACCESSIBLE POLICY**

### **1. Purpose**

We have a duty to ensure that all people have access to Council meetings. Access may include physical access to a venue, availability of documentation in an appropriate format or the provision of equipment, space or breaks for those who need it. This policy applies equally to those participating in a meeting or those attending only to observe or to speak in a specific section of the meeting.

The Town Council will do its best to accommodate accessibility requirements notified at least 48 hours in advance of meetings.

### **2. Meeting documentation**

The Town Council publishes all meeting documentation on its website, which is compliant with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Our accessibility statement is available on our website.

We are aware that some meeting documents are not fully accessible and will endeavour to provide these in an alternative format upon request.

### **3. Meeting Venues**

Most Town Council meetings are held on its own premises, at the Town Council offices on Hockliffe Street or in one of the community buildings located at Pages Park, Astral Park and Linslade Memorial Playing Fields.

Venue directions are available on our website.

All venues but Pages Park have specified disabled car parking spaces.

Access to all venues is step free and all entrance doors are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, mobility scooters or walkers.

Public conveniences are available at ground level in the three community buildings.

Disabled toilets are available at Astral Park and Pages Park community buildings.

Currently there are only Ladies toilet facilities at ground floor level at the Town Council offices. The building is not owned by the Town Council.

Facilities for assistance dogs can be made available with prior notice.

#### **4. Meeting scheduling**

The Town Council will avoid scheduling meetings on English Bank Holiday dates or significant religious festivals, as far as practicable. Sometimes meeting dates are prescribed by the need to meet statutory deadlines.

#### **5. Meeting Duration**

Council meetings will not ordinarily be of longer duration than a maximum of 2.5 hours and the public speaking session will always be near the start of the meeting.

The meeting agenda will identify any specified breaks during the meeting.

The Council is mindful that breaks may be helpful for all manner of health-related conditions. A break may be called at any time at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting. The Council will endeavour to accommodate any requests made in advance regarding breaks during meetings.

#### **6. Meeting details**

Meetings will have a clear agenda which is published several days in advance.

Participants at meetings will have name cards/badges so they can be clearly identified.

Meetings will have specific and separate seating areas for those participating in the meeting and those observing the meeting or speaking in the public session. Within the seating areas, individuals can choose seats to meet their own requirements e.g. near an aisle, near an exit or near a window.

The Chairman of the meeting will be clearly visible to everyone and will make all meeting announcements. The Chairman will have been advised of any individual requirements requested in advance by meeting participants or attendees.

#### **7. Visual impairment**

Venue signage will ordinarily be dark lettering on a light background and visible at all height levels.

All venues use LED lighting. Dimmer switches are available at Astral Park Sports & Community Centre.

Printed material can be provided in large print (size 18 font) or on non-white paper if requested in advance. As agenda documents are available on our website, viewers will be able to enlarge documents accordingly on their own devices.

Meeting documents are provided electronically to Councillors via the Modern.gov app which allows for the font size to be expanded, as well as for text to be highlighted.

Where equipment such as flipcharts, white board, smart TVs or other screens are used, the Council will aim to ensure these are visible to all meeting participants.

## **8. Hearing impairment**

A hearing loop is installed at the Astral Park Sports & Community Centre and the Town Council is investigating installing this facility at other venues.

We are aware that large, echoing spaces and background noise can be problematic and will endeavour to minimise these as far as is possible.

The meeting Chair will manage the debate and ensure only one person speaks at a time.

The meeting Chair and any other key speakers will ordinarily be seated facing the rest of the room to allow other to see them and to lipread.

At some meetings the Council may use a public address system, roving or fixed microphones or a projector screen for speech-to-text captioning.

## **9. Disabilities and individual requirements**

We are aware that some individuals may suffer with conditions such as chronic illness or mental health conditions and will identify themselves as having disabilities which may not be visible to others.

We will endeavour to accommodate individual requirements where these have been notified to us in advance of a meeting – for example, specific dietary requirements, seating wishes, document format, access requirements, being accompanied by a support person or assistance dog, a need for breaks, any special requirements based on cultural or religious beliefs.

Please contact the Council at least 48 hours before a meeting to make us aware of any such individual requirements. The details of any health conditions need not be disclosed and no personal information will be retained by the Council.

## **10. Evacuation routes and procedures**

The Council will be mindful of evacuation routes for wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility when determining emergency evacuation procedures.

**Adopted by Leighton-Linslade Town Council:**