

Public Access to Meetings of Avon Fire Authority

Who may speak at the public access slot on the agenda?

Any person who is a resident of the City and County of Bristol or of any of the Districts of Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire or North Somerset and/or a representative of a business or voluntary organisation operating in the above areas who is affected by decisions to be taken by the Fire Authority may address the Authority to present a petition, make a statement, or as leader of a deputation.

How do I make a request?

You must give prior written notice of their wish to address the Authority.

You can email the Clerk to the Fire Authority at the.clerk@avonfire.gov.uk or write to the Clerk at Police & Fire HQ, PO Box 37, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8JJ. If you require assistance with submitting a request please email or telephone the Clerks' Office (0117 926 2061 ext 231) and assistance will be provided.

How much notice must I give?

You must give **at least two clear working days** in advance of the meeting. This means that there must be 2 days from Monday to Friday (excluding bank Holidays) in between the day you give notice and the day of the meeting. Here are some examples of how this will work:

1. If the meeting is on a Friday you must give notice by midnight on the Tuesday before (Wednesday and Thursday are the 2 clear working days).
2. If the meeting is on a Tuesday you have to give notice by midnight on Thursday with Friday and Monday being the clear days.

What do I need to tell you in my request?

You must provide your full name and your address together with a copy of any petition and the full text of your comments you intend to make in support of your petition, statement or deputation. At the meeting you will only be able to speak on the subject matter contained in the text you have supplied.

This is subject to any reasonable adjustments you require arising from any disability that you have in submitting the full text which should be agreed with the Clerk prior to the deadline for receipt of notice.

Are there any constraints on what I can speak about?

The Chair of the meeting has the final say who can speak.

The following are not allowed in respect of any matters that:

- a) are outside the responsibility of the Authority.
- b) are subject to court proceedings.
- c) are defamatory, frivolous or offensive.
- d) requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- e) are about a matter which has already been lodged with the Authority or with another statutory body as a formal complaint (regardless of whether or not that complaint has been dealt with).
- f) are matters from employees or former employees connected with their employment or former employment.
- g) contain an allegation against, or comments about, the conduct of individual Members or Officers.

Public access does not extend to those who have received or are about to be served with a notice under the Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order 2005.

How long can I speak for?

The total amount of time allocated at each Authority meeting for public access will be no more than 30 minutes, and each speaker will speak for no more than 5 minutes. The Chair shall have discretion to extend these time limits.

If you cannot attend the meeting you may nominate a Member of the Authority to speak about the petition.

A petition, statement or deputation not presented because of the time limit shall be accepted without formal presentation.

What happens after I have spoken?

The Authority has a number of options. It may:

- a) refer the matter without debate to the relevant Officer for investigation and to report back to the Authority or to one of its Committees;
- b) take it into consideration if it relates to an item on a current or forthcoming agenda (at the time that item is to be considered); or
- c) take no further action.

How do I participate in a virtual meeting?

Having lodged a Public Access Statement with the Fire Authority at least 2 clear working days prior to a Committee or Fire Authority meeting, where the meeting is being conducted virtually, you will be invited to participate at the 'Public Access Statement' stage of the Agenda.

The guidance notes above for 'How long can I speak for?' and 'What happens after I have spoken?', also apply to virtual meetings.

This is how the meeting will work:

- You will receive an email from Democratic Services upon receipt of your Public Access Statement asking you to choose whether:
 - You are happy for the Chair or the Clerk to read out your Public Access Statement on your behalf, or
 - You would like to submit a recording of yourself reading out your Public Access Statement which will be played during the meeting.
- If you elect to provide a recording of yourself reading out your Public Access Statement, you will be expected to provide this to Democratic Services at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, so that the recording can be vetted in advance.
- The recording should follow these guidelines and at the beginning you should introduce yourself before reading your Public Access Statement.
- Democratic Services will contact you if for any reason your recording has been rejected and your statement will be read out on your behalf.
- On the day and time of the meeting, please watch the meeting via our You Tube page, where you will be able to watch the entire meeting, including your Public Access Statement.

Things to remember so that you can have your say:

1. Make sure you can be seen and heard when you record your Public Access Statement.
 - Set your screen so your face can be seen and sit with light in front of you, so your face is not in shadow.
 - Try to make sure the view behind you is blank or neutral.
 - Avoid wearing any clothing with offensive designs or words.
2. Protect your privacy.
 - Avoid personal information or identifiable photographs and personal memorabilia or information within your camera's view.

- Remember that your recording will be played during a meeting which is broadcast live and a recording will be available on YouTube afterwards.

3. Recordings will only be used, if you adhere to the following:

- Please ensure that you stick to the script of your Public Access Statement.
- Please ensure that all comments are respectful to other people.
- Please do not swear, use abusive language or say anything offensive about anyone.