



Exeter City Council

How decisions are made

Your Council – A guide to its councillors and committees

Contact: democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

	Pages
1 Exeter City Council's Committees and how they work	3 - 4
2 How to find out what's on an agenda	5 - 6
3 What happens at meetings	7 - 8
4 Portfolio Holders	9 - 10
5 A summary of your legal rights to attend meetings	11 - 12
6 How you can ask a question at a Council or Committee meeting	13 - 14
7 Your chance to speak at the Planning Committee	15 - 16

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

Exeter City Council's Committees and how they work

Councillors are elected from 13 wards in Exeter to represent you and take decisions on your behalf on all kinds of important issues affecting the everyday life of the City, including how to provide homes and car parks; sports, art and leisure facilities; how to care for Exeter's environment and ensure the Council has enough funds to provide essential services. Councillors (also known as Members) meet to set priorities for the present and plan for the future.

The Council, comprising 39 Members, meets several times each year at Guildhall in the High Street to decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget.

In addition to recommending major strategies to the Council, the Executive is responsible for the most significant and day to day decisions which are not delegated to officers.

There are two Scrutiny Committees, Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee. Their terms of reference can be found [here](#) by clicking on the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

In addition the Council has Planning, Audit and Governance and Licensing Committees.

Members of the public are welcome to attend Council, Executive, Scrutiny and other Committee meetings to listen to the debate. On some occasions, where confidential information is to be discussed, you will not be able to stay for the whole meeting.

Members of the public may also ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council, the Executive and Scrutiny Committees. You may also speak either for or against planning applications at Planning Committee. Please see [Public speaking at meetings - Overview - Exeter City Council](#)

Citizens' rights

Citizens' rights can be found in the [Constitution](#) under Article 3 – Citizens and the Council.

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

The Council's Committee Structure

What is an agenda and where can I see a copy?

An agenda is a list and order of things that will happen during the meeting. Each item on the agenda will usually have a report from officers which will contain recommendations.

The agenda for meetings of Council, the Executive, Scrutiny and other Committees are available for inspection by members of the public at least five days before the date of the meeting. Agenda for meetings can be viewed on the Council's [website](#)

How can I find out what meetings are taking place?

Every month the Council produces a list of forthcoming meetings. These are displayed outside the Guildhall – the list gives full details of the date, time and venue for each meeting. An interactive [calendar](#) can also be found on the website.

What time do meetings start?

Executive and other Committees generally start at 5.30pm. Meetings are usually held in the Civic Centre, Paris Street. Full Council meetings are held at Exeter Guildhall at 6pm.

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

What happens at meetings

All Committee meetings are open to the public and there will be a number of agenda and reports available for the public at each meeting. At the top of the agenda you will find the name and telephone number of the person who is responsible for coordinating the arrangements for the meeting (the Democratic Services Officer) who will be pleased to help with any queries before or after the meeting.

Who attends meetings?

All committee members will have a nameplate on the table in front of them so you can identify them. There will also be other people sat at the table – these will be officers of the Council and are normally only there to advise the committee or answer questions – they are not allowed to take part in the decision-making process.

The Chair is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

What happens at meetings?

First, the committee is asked to make sure the notes of the previous meeting (the minutes) are correct. If councillors agree they are correct, they are confirmed as the official record of that meeting.

The committee will usually debate the information in the report attached to the agenda for each item and will make a decision by taking a vote or everyone indicating they are happy with the proposal. Sometimes there is no debate on a matter before the vote is taken. This doesn't mean that the report hasn't received careful consideration; it means that no-one wants to question the recommendations.

A member of a committee may declare an interest as defined in the Members Code of Conduct under Part 5c of the [Constitution](#).

Can I take part?

You are not allowed to take part in the discussion at the meeting, but members of the public may ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council, the Executive and Scrutiny Committees. Please see the [Public speaking at meetings - Overview - Exeter City Council](#) page on the website for further information.

The public may be excluded from part of the meeting if it is likely that exempt information would be disclosed (see section headed *Your rights to attend meetings*) which details your legal rights to attend meetings and to inspect and copy papers). When this type of information is about to be discussed, the Chair will ask members of the public and press to leave the meeting. The business that is dealt with in public is usually taken at the start of the meeting to make it easier for you to know when to attend.

What happens after the meeting?

Following the meeting, the Democratic Services Officer will prepare the minutes, and officers will act on the decisions taken.

Decisions made at Executive will normally come into force five working days after publication on the website of the Statement of Decisions (which are normally published within two working days of the meeting) unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. You can also search for and view recent committee [agenda, reports and minutes](#) on the website.



Exeter City Council

Executive Members and Portfolios

A list of Executive Members and Portfolio Holders can be found under Part 3b in the [Constitution](#).

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

Your rights to attend meetings

The access to information rules for meetings of Exeter City Council and its Committees are set out under Sections 100A-H and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended and by the regulations under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the Executive.

Exeter City Council supports the principles of transparency and openness in relation to its decision-making and will try to make as much information as possible available to the public.

For further information, please see the Access to Information Procedure Rules under Part 4 of the [Constitution](#).

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

How a member of the public can ask a question at a Council or Committee meeting

Members of the public may ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council, the Executive and Scrutiny Committees.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by submitting no later than 10am, three working days before the day of the meeting.

Please visit the [Speaking at a committee](#) page for further information and a link to the online form to request to speak.

After the meeting

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires us to publically publish Council meeting agendas and minutes and accompanying documentation in which names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings will be recorded. We have a duty to look after the information we hold about you. Council meetings may also be broadcast through social media and the press and other members of the public may be present at the meetings. Names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings are recorded in minutes. For more details on how we use your information please visit [the Democratic Services Privacy Notice](#) on the website.

This page is intentionally left blank



Exeter City Council

Your chance to speak at the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee considers significant or major planning applications which relate to the City. The majority of planning applications are determined by the Council's planning officers under delegated powers.

The City Council wants to make sure the decision making process is an open one and allows people who have an interest in an application to express their view on significant or major applications. This opportunity is aimed primarily at individuals who have a direct interest in the application. Consequently, professional representation is strongly discouraged.

As part of the usual planning application process, all applications are publicised and people already have the right to send in written comments about an application.

These comments are summarised and reported to the Committee. The right to speak at the meeting is designed to complement the existing process, not replace it.

How can I register to speak?

Planning Committee is usually held on a Monday at 5.30pm at the Civic Centre. Anyone wishing to speak for or against an application must submit the request to speak by 10am on the Thursday before the meeting.

If the meeting is one not being held on a Monday, then the office must be contacted by 10am two working days before the committee.

Further information and a link to the online form to request to speak can be found on the [Speaking at planning committee meetings](#) page on the website.

Need more information?

If you have any questions about speaking at a Planning Committee, or you wish to know the dates, times and venue of meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01392 265477 or see [Planning Committee](#) on our website.

If you have any questions about any particular item on the Committee report, you need to speak to the Planning Officer who is dealing with it. Their name, telephone number and email address are available on the neighbour notification letter.

After the meeting

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires us to publically publish Council meeting agendas and minutes and accompanying documentation in which names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings will be recorded. We have a duty to look after the information we hold about you. Council meetings may also be broadcast live through social media and the press and other members of the public may be present at the meetings. Names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings are recorded in minutes. For more details

on how we use your information please visit [the Democratic Services Privacy Notice](#) on the website.