

Guidance Note for Members of the Public Attending RQIA Authority Meetings

1. Introduction

- 1.1 RQIA holds its Authority Meetings in public, although certain matters may be dealt with in a confidential section of the meeting. These meetings are listed on RQIA website and members of the public are welcome to attend. This short guide explains how to join a meeting; what to expect; and some basic rules.

2. Etiquette and Speaking Rights

- 2.1 All members of the public are welcome to attend Authority Meetings. However, these are working meetings, with formal decisions to be taken and information to be reviewed.

If you want to attend simply to observe, please contact Mr Aaron Addidle, Business Support Officer, on 028 9536 8613 or email at: Aaron.Addidle@rqia.org.uk as far in advance as possible (and no later than 12:00 noon on the day before the meeting), so that you can be provided with a virtual link, where appropriate, or details of the venue and given the Agenda and any help you may require to join the meeting.

If there is a specific issue you want to raise at an Authority meeting, the RQIA's Standing Orders (December 2021) state:

“1.1.8 Deputations and Speaking Rights

Deputations from any meeting, association, public body or an individual may be permitted to address a public meeting of the Authority provided notice of the intended deputation and a summary of the subject matter is given to the Authority at least two clear days prior to the meeting and provided that the Chairperson agrees. The specified notice may be waived at the discretion of the Chairperson.

In normal circumstances this facility shall be confined to a short statement or presentation from the members of the deputation; a copy of any such submission should be made available to the Authority prior to the meeting. The Chairperson shall determine the actual allotted time and if the deputation has sufficiently covered the issue.”

- 2.2 Where members of the public attend a public meeting without prior notice, the Chairperson will welcome them to the meeting and outline the order of business for the meeting.
- 2.3 At the end of the meeting there may be an opportunity, at the Chairperson's invitation, for those members of the public to address the Authority or inform the Authority of their interest in the work of RQIA. Members of the public may also be afforded an opportunity to raise any questions they may have in respect of that day's business/agenda. In normal circumstances, the amount of time available for any member of the public to speak shall not exceed 10 minutes, except at the discretion of the Chairperson.

3. During the Authority Meeting

- 3.1 Authority Meetings are currently being held both in-person and virtually via MS Teams. An MS Teams link will be provided for those attending virtually.
- 3.2 Arrangements to encourage and facilitate attendance of the public at Authority meetings, and reasonable facilities for representatives of the press and broadcasting media to report Authority meetings, shall be made available. These include the provision of opportunities to attend using virtual methods such as video conferencing.

The Chairperson shall give such directions as he/she thinks fit with regard to the arrangements for meetings and accommodation of the public and representatives of the press and broadcasting media so as to ensure that the Authority's business shall be conducted without interruption and disruption.

Please do contact us to inform us of any accessibility requirements you may have.

- 3.3 Without prejudice to the power to exclude on grounds of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public shall be required to withdraw upon the Authority resolving as follows: *"That in the interests of public order the meeting adjourns for (the period to be specified) to enable the Authority to complete business without the presence of the public."*
- 3.4 The names of those making deputations or speaking at an Authority meeting, along with the detail of the subject matter and the discussion, will be included in the minutes of the Authority meeting. An extract of the draft Authority minutes will be shared with those making deputations for their review for factual accuracy purposes only. Those making deputations or speaking at an Authority meeting will be unable to remove detail from, or add detail to, the draft minutes.

4. Recording Proceedings

- 4.1 Members of the public or representatives of the press and broadcasting media are not permitted to record proceedings in any manner whatsoever, other than in writing, or to make an oral report of proceedings as they take place from within the meeting, without prior agreement of the Chairperson.

5. Queries for the Authority

- 5.1 Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Aaron Addidle, Business Support Officer, on 028 9536 8613 or email at: Aaron.Addidle@rqia.org.uk if you have any queries about these arrangements; you can also write to the RQIA Authority at:

RQIA Authority
1st Floor, James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Gasworks
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Ms Christine Collins MBE
Authority Chair