

## **Recording of Council meetings guidance**

### **Guidelines for members of the public attending and recording public meetings**

#### 1. Introduction

In general members of the public have the right to attend all public meetings of the Council. However, in certain circumstances when documents contain confidential or restricted information members of the public will be asked to leave the room when those items are being discussed.

The Council's Monitoring Officer is legally responsible for keeping records of decisions and ensuring public access to information. A member of his team will be in attendance at meetings of the council to provide advice and guidance in accordance with the regulations and the Council's Constitution.

The Government's 'Openness of Local Bodies Regulations' (the 2014 Regulations) were published in August 2014 and afford members of the public the rights to report on proceedings via online media, for example blogs, twitter and other social networking sites and local news forums. The Regulations are supported by a Department for Communities and Local Government plain English guide.

#### 2. Responsibilities of the council

The council will provide reasonable facilities for those wishing to report on proceedings and has the discretion to amend from time to time its definition of what it determines to be such facilities. The Council provides the following facilities:

- Free public WiFi in the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms;
- Free access to public agendas, meeting and councillor information, minutes, decision details, elections info and more on the Council's web pages;
- Reasonable assistance in providing adequate space for recording to take place;
- The Council Chamber and meeting rooms are equipped with a hearing loop system. Members, Officers and members of the public who are hard of hearing can benefit from using the system.

#### 3. Responsibilities of the public

By attending a public meeting of the Council, Executive Board or any committee or sub-committee, you are agreeing to these guidelines as a whole and in particular the stipulations listed below:

- Anyone planning to record meetings of the Council and its public committees through any audio, visual or written methods they find appropriate can do so providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting;
- You are welcome to attend a public meeting to report proceedings, either in 'real-time' or after conclusion of the meeting, on a blog, social networking site, news forum or other online media;

- You may use a laptop, tablet device, smartphone or portable camera to record a written or audio transcript of proceedings during the meeting;
- Facilities within the Town Hall and Council Chamber are limited and recording equipment must be of a reasonable size and nature in order to be easily accommodated. You are asked to contact a member of the Democratic Services Team if you have any large or complex recording equipment to see how this can be accommodated within the existing facilities;
- You must not interrupt proceedings and digital equipment must be set to 'silent' mode;
- Any person whose behaviour threatens to disrupt orderly conduct will be asked to leave;
- Be aware that libellous comments against the council, individual councillors or officers could result in legal action being taken against you;
- The recorded images must not be edited in a way in which there is a clear aim to distort the truth or misrepresent those taking part in the proceedings;
- Personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability status could also result in legal action being taken against you;
- Failure to comply with the above requirements may result in the support and assistance of the Council in the recording of proceedings being withdrawn.

The council regards violation of any of the points above as a risk to the orderly conduct of a meeting. The council therefore reserves the right to refuse entry, to any further council meetings, to any person who breaches any of these restrictions. The Chair of the meeting will ensure that the meeting runs in an effective manner and has the power to ensure that the meeting is not disturbed through the use of flash photography, intrusive camera equipment or the person recording the meeting moving around the room.

#### 4. Procedure at meetings

The following will apply to all meetings to be recorded by the Council:-

##### 4.1 Main provisions:

- The Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to request the termination or suspension of recording if in the opinion of the Chairman continuing to record would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.  
This would include:
  - a) Public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting;
  - b) Any other reason moved and seconded and supported by the Council.
- Any elected Member who is concerned about any audio recording should raise their concerns with the Monitoring Officer or in their absence, the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

4.2 A note is included on the agenda informing members of the public that the proceedings may be recorded. Information is also displayed outside of the meeting explaining the rights to film.

### 4.3 Conduct of Meetings

- i. At the start of each meeting to be recorded, an announcement will be made to the effect that the meeting is being or may be recorded, and that the Chairman may also terminate or suspend the recording of the meeting, in accordance with this protocol.
- ii. It is essential that everyone present remembers to switch on their microphone when speaking (when in the Council Chamber) and that the Chairman or advisor states the date and description of the meeting at its commencement.
- iii. When meetings are private (not open to the public) or when confidential or exempt items of business are transacted (when the press and public are excluded), access to replay/obtain copies will be restricted in accordance with the Access to Information rules.

Members of the public are able to submit questions to Council meetings, please refer to the guide on asking a [Public Question at a Council Meeting \[pdf\]](#) attached to this protocol.

If you would like to attend a meeting of the council, please read our [Guide to Committees \[pdf\]](#) for more information attached to this protocol.