



Guidelines for members of the public attending public meetings

On 10 September 2012 the government introduced new regulations relating to council meetings and residents' access to information.

The full legislation is available here: [The Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

Part of this legislation offers new legal rights to 'citizen reporters'. This means that members of the public are afforded the same rights as accredited journalists to report on proceedings via online media, for example blogs, twitter, other social networking sites and hyperlocal news forums.

Responsibilities of the council

- The council will publish a notice of the meeting on the website 28 days prior, including a document explaining the key decision to be made plus any related documents and how to access these documents
- In the case of a 'special urgent decision' where 28 days notice cannot be given, the council will publish a notice to explain the reasons why
- The council will justify the decision to hold any meeting in private and allow the public to make representation against this decision
- For members of the public attending a meeting for the purpose of reporting the proceedings, the council will provide, as far as practicable, reasonable facilities.

Responsibilities of the public

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

- You are welcome to attend a public meeting to report proceedings, either in 'realtime' 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 or smartphone to record a written or audio transcript of proceedings during the meeting
- You must not interrupt proceedings and digital gadgets 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
- 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.

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.