

New rights to report on a public meeting

1. Information

- 1.1 New rules came into force in July 2014 to enable members of the press and public the rights to film, audio-record, take photographs and use social media to report the proceedings of Parish and Town meetings open to the public.
- 1.2 As a result of these new regulations the advice is in the short-term the Council waive the relevant provisions included in the current Standing Orders, which could inhibit the new reporting rules and then take steps to update their standing orders to reflect these changes. The Council should also put a policy in place which clearly defines what is acceptable during a Council meeting and the filming of members of the public.
- 1.3 I have reviewed these new regulations and propose the below policy:

2. Policy on the reporting of meetings of the Council

This policy details the acceptable use for public meetings to be filmed, audio-recorded, photographed and the permitted use of social media. Under these new regulations:

1. Officers, councillors, guests and members of the public may be filmed, audio-recorded or photographed during a meeting which is open to the public. This may only be performed from the public seating area allocated at each meeting.
2. Out of courtesy any persons present wishing to film or audio record a public meeting must advise the Clerk before the meeting commences of their intent to do so, submitting their name and contact details which will be held by the Clerk. Filming and audio recording may be performed from the public seating area allocated at each meeting. Flashes must be switched off before the start of the meeting and intrusive lighting is prohibited.
3. The Chair will announce at the start of each meeting, any notice which has been provided of the intent to film or audio-record the meeting including the person's name who will be performing this recording. Anyone present who actively objects to being filmed must inform the Chair following this announcement, so the recorder can ensure that this request is adhered to; so long as it does not undermine the transparency of the meeting. All persons present have the right the view the footage recorded at the meeting, which must be supplied to the Clerk following the meeting.
4. Meetings where the press and public are excluded, may not be filmed and all recording equipment and devices must be removed and switch off before this closed session begins, to ensure that confidentiality is not breached. This includes Council and councillor equipment. The Council must ensure that they satisfy themselves that this has been adhered to before the closed part of the meeting commences.
5. The use of social media such as blogging, Facebook and Twitter is also permitted by the public during this meeting, so long as it does not disrupt the proceedings. All devices must be switched onto silent during the meeting to prevent any disruption. Councillors or officers wishing to film or use social media during a meeting should retire to the public gallery area designated for this purpose.
6. Under the Council Standing Orders any disruptive behaviour may result in you being asked to be excluded from the meeting. In relation to this policy examples of disruptive behaviour, but are limited to are; asking people to repeat statements for the purpose of the recording, flash photography, excessive noise in recording or setting up of equipment during the meeting, filming or recording from any other area than the designated public seating area or oral commentary during the meeting.

Report produced by
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