

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

Guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government – published 30th June 2014

“Facilities” will be made available – space to view and hear the meeting, seats and, ideally, a desk. No indication in guidance about power supply or access to wifi.

Limits – the law of defamation continues to apply as does the law on public order offences. Being “disruptive” could lead to expulsion.

Revised standing orders are needed to enable those in charge of meetings to maintain control and deal with disruption.

Draft revised standing orders for new rules on recording and blogging

RECORDING AND REPORTING OF PROCEEDINGS BY THE MEDIA AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Audio and visual recordings of a meeting of the Council, Committees and other Council bodies by the general public, or the media, is permitted. It would be helpful if those wishing to record could contact the Council before the meeting so that we can ensure the necessary facilities are in place. The Chair of the meeting will advise the public that the meeting is being recorded. A request to record a meeting shall only be refused if the Chair of the meeting believes recording would disrupt the meeting. The purpose of these standing orders is to provide guidance for members of the press, or public, on the taking of photographs and/ or the audio / visual recording of any Council meeting which is held in public.

There are no restrictions on anyone at a council meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar social media provided that the Chair does not consider their actions are disrupting the proceedings of the meeting.

Limitations

Although there is a statutory right to photograph and record Council meetings the proceedings of that meeting must not be disrupted by the use of media tools and must not inhibit community involvement in the proceedings.

Audio and Visual Recording - Your Obligations

Any member of the public, or of the media, wishing to photograph or record a meeting is asked to comply with the following:

- a) any photography or audio / visual recording takes place from a fixed position in the meeting room approved by the Chair so as to reduce disruption to the proceedings;
- b) use of flash photography or additional lighting is for a limited period only during the meeting at a point in the proceedings agreed in advance with the Chair;

c) if the Chair feels that any photography, audio or visual recording is disrupting the meeting in any way, or any pre-meeting agreement has been breached, then the operator of the equipment will stop;

d) if, during the meeting, a motion is passed to exclude the press and public, because confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, then all rights to record the meeting are removed and the operator of the equipment will be required to stop recording and /or photography;

e) if a meeting is adjourned by the Chair then the operator of the equipment should stop any recording or photography at the point at which the meeting is adjourned;

f) any request made by the Chair regarding respecting the public's right to privacy is complied with;

g) people seated in the public seating area should not be photographed, filmed or recorded without the consent of the individuals concerned. Public notices will confirm that recording may take place and it is for the public to inform the council, or the person recording, if they object.

h) use must not be made of an image or recording if consent is refused by a member of the public featured in that recording or image;

i) photographs, audio, and visual recordings should not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing the views being recorded in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect.

Notices will be displayed in the room advising the public that meetings can be recorded legally. The Chair will also make an announcement that the meeting will be photographed and /or recorded or filmed. The Council may, on occasion, audio record meetings for minuting purposes only. The relevant Chair will make an announcement to this effect

Audio and Visual Recording - Your Rights

If, as a member of the public, you do not wish to be photographed, filmed or recorded please inform the Clerk in attendance at the meeting or the Chair of the meeting when notice is given that a request to photograph / record has been received.

Procedure Prior to the Meeting for those Wishing to Record or Photograph a Meeting

It would be appreciated if requests to take photographs or to record meetings open to the public, either by members of the public or by the media, were, wherever possible, made to the Clerk for the meeting concerned before the meeting. Contact details are:

It would be helpful for the request to include the following information:

a) which meeting the request refers to;

b) the name, organisation (if applicable) and contact details of the person making the request;

c) what equipment it is intended will be used (to determine what facilities might be required);

d) what the photographs, or audio / visual recording will be used for and / or where the information is to be published (this is helpful for the Chair to be able to inform the public).

Any equipment required for recording purposes should be set up before the meeting starts to avoid disturbance.

Social Media

There are no restrictions placed on anyone at the meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar “social media” provided that the Chair does not consider their actions are disrupting the proceedings of the meeting.

If the Chair feels the use of social media is disrupting the proceedings the Councillor, member of the public or media representative using social media may be required to stop.

If use continues the Chair will ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave then the Chair may adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption.