

**GUIDANCE FOR FILMING, AUDIO-RECORDING, PHOTOGRAPHING AND USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 When meetings of the Council are open to the public any person attending may report on the meeting. This can take the form of:
- filming
  - audio-recording
  - taking photographs
  - using social media
  - using any other means to enable someone not present to see/hear proceedings as they take place or later
  - providing written commentary both during, outside or after the meeting
  - providing oral commentary outside or after the meeting
- 1.2 Oral commentary is not permitted during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.
- 1.3 You will not be able to report on meetings of the Council where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed i.e. from a meeting or part of a meeting which the public are excluded from attending.
- 1.4 For the purposes of this guidance 'reporting' includes filming, audio- recording, photographing, written and oral commentary, and the use of social media. Social media includes, but is not limited to Twitter, Facebook and blogging.

**2. Before the meeting**

- 2.1 Reasonable facilities will be provided for any member of the public wishing to report on proceedings. Prior permission is not required, however anyone wishing to report on proceedings at a meeting is advised to contact the Democratic Services Office as early as possible before the start of the meeting so that arrangements can be discussed.

**3. At the meeting**

- 3.1 Notices will be displayed in the meeting room advising that proceedings may be reported in order for those who object to being filmed or photographed to be aware of the possibility.
- 3.2 Anyone filming or photographing during the meeting should take care not to film or photograph children without permission or anyone else present who objects to being filmed/photographed as long as this does not undermine the broader transparency of the meeting.
- 3.3 Members of the public attending a meeting to ask a question, present a petition or make a representation will be deemed to have given consent to being photographed, filmed or recorded.

## **Annex to Council Procedure Rules**

- 3.4 Photography or filming should take place from a fixed position in the meeting room to ensure that the view of Councillors, officers, public and press, is not obstructed and the meeting is not disrupted.
- 3.5 Photography or audio/visual recording should not be conducted so as to disrupt the conduct of the meeting or impede other members of the public being able to see, hear or film etc the proceedings. Examples of disruptive conduct are:
- moving to areas outside the area designated for the public without the consent of the Mayor/Chairman
  - excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the meeting
  - intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
  - asking people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording
- 3.6 If someone acts in a disruptive manner the Mayor/Chairman may ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave, the Mayor/Chairman will adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption.
- 4. After the meeting**
- 4.1 Photographs and audio/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 expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being photographed or recorded.
- 4.2 The responsibility for how any reporting is used rests with the person who makes the report and not the Council.
- 4.3 Please note that the law of the land applies, including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences. Freedom of speech within the law should be exercised with personal and social responsibility, showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others.

### **Background documents**

- The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014
- Open and accountable local government: a guide for the press and public in attending and reporting meetings of local government - August 2014

**Director of Corporate Services**  
**February 2015**