

Guidance for the recording of public Council meetings

1. Introduction

The aim of this guidance is to help any members of the press and public who wish to film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media such as tweeting and blogging, to report the proceedings of all Council meetings that are open to the public.

2. Do people need to ask permission to record Council meetings?

There is no requirement to ask permission to record a Council meeting. However, the Council requests anyone intending to carry out this activity to let Democratic Services staff know in advance so that all the necessary arrangements can be made.

3. Can people tweet or blog about a Council meeting?

Yes, people may report meetings via social media of any kind. Therefore, bloggers, tweeters, Facebook and YouTube users, and individuals with their own website, are able to report meetings.

4. Commentary during the meeting

Any person can provide written commentary during a meeting, as well as oral commentary outside or after the meeting.

Oral commentary cannot be provided during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.

5. Can people be asked to leave a meeting and stop recording?

The majority of the Council's meetings are open to members of the public. However, meetings cannot be recorded when it is agreed to formally exclude the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

People will also be asked to leave a meeting if their activities are disrupting it.. Examples can include:

- Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chair,
- Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate/discussion,
- Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography; and
- Asking for people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording.

6. Are there any limits about recording a meeting or what people can say in a tweet or recording?

The Council requests that the public gallery is not filmed and that people respect the wishes of members of the public who have come to speak at a meeting but do not wish to be filmed. More generally the law of the land applies – including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences (see the Crown Prosecution Service guidance on social media). Freedom of speech within the law should also be exercised with personal and social responsibility – showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others.

The Council asks those recording proceedings not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings, or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may distort what has taken place or present it unfairly.

7. Can people leave recording equipment in a public meeting room and record without being present?

This can take place, however, the Council will require any such recording to stop if at any stage the meeting considers confidential items. The Council, therefore, suggests that people remain in the meeting. The authority takes no responsibility for any unsupervised equipment.

8. Further questions

If you have any questions on the issue of filming/recording of meetings please contact Democratic and Services at democratic.services@highpeak.gov.uk or by calling: 01298 28400 Ext. 2139.