



Guidance for the recording of public Council meetings

1. Introduction

Chippenham Town Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it conducts its decision making.

The Openness of Local Bodies Regulations 2014 allows any person attending a public local government meeting to report proceedings by:

- Taking photographs
- Filming
- Audio-recording
- Using social media such as blogging, tweeting etc.

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.

NOTE:

At the beginning of each meeting, the Chairman will make an announcement that the meeting may be filmed or recorded and will ask if anyone objects to this. Meeting agendas will also carry this message:

Recording, including filming, audio recording, taking photographs, blogging, tweeting and using other social media websites is permitted at Council meetings which are open to the public - however, anyone wishing to do so must speak to the Town Council staff prior to the meeting as there are rules which must be followed.

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 advises any person wishing to carry out this activity to let staff know in advance so that all necessary arrangements can be made for the public meeting.

Can anyone ask to not be recorded?

Any member of the public has the right not to be recorded. We ensure that agendas for, and signage at, council meetings make it clear that recording can take place - if anyone speaking at the meeting does not wish to be recorded they must let the Chairman of the meeting know.

Any children present at the meeting are not to be filmed unless their parents/guardians have given their consent.

3. Can people tweet or blog 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. It is not permitted for oral commentary to 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 they act in a disruptive manner.

Examples can include:

- Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chairman,
- 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?

Without undermining the broader transparency of the meeting, the Council requests that the recording must be overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting), non-disruptive, 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 libel and defamation, the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the law on public order offences (see the Crown Prosecution Service guidance on social media). For example please be aware that photographing a Ward of Court is usually regarded as an actionable Contempt of Court. 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 ridicule, or show a lack of respect towards those being filmed/ recorded.

Filming elsewhere in the building outside of the meeting room is not permitted without permission.

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 became a private meeting. 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 the Chief Executive at www.chippenham.gov.uk or

by calling: **01249 446699**