



POLICY FOR THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON ATTENDING AND REPORTING MEETINGS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Reviewed LPC Meeting 13 May 2024 (Minor amendments)

BACKGROUND

The Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960 gave the right to the public and the press to attend meetings of Parish Councils and Committees of the whole of the Council and to receive copies of agendas. Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 extended the 1960 rights for electors to inspect minutes and accounts. LGA 1972 then amended in 1985 to make a more extensive provision for access to agendas, background papers, confidential and exempt information and meetings. LGA 1986 made provision for the promulgation of a code of recommended practice on Local Government publicity.

Rights are available for Councillors to examine records if he/she needs them in order to fulfil their duties. Rights are also available to Councillors and to members of the public under the Freedom of Information Act.

INTRODUCTION

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 came into force in August 2014 and this gives rights for members of the public and the press to be able to film, audio record, tweet, blog, and publish at any meetings open to the public. This includes committees under the 'umbrella' of the Parish Council. It does not however give people the right to record, film or tweet, blog, and publish any matters which are deemed to be confidential, and which would be held in private session.

Anything published on Social Media and which has been doctored in anyway, the Parish Council would not have any recourse, and the matter would have to be dealt with appropriately by the Parish Council.

There is no legal requirement for Parish Councils to webcast their meetings, but it may be something that may be considered.

Reasonable facilities should be provided for members of the press, if so required.

Use of digital and Social Media recording tools, for example Twitter, blogging or audio recording be allowed as long as it is carried out in a non-disruptive way, and only to the extent that it does not interfere with any person's ability, even where he/she has a disability, to follow the debate.

Persons recording, filming etc must respect the rights of other people attending under the Data Protection Act 1998 (*example children or vulnerable adults*).

Reference is to be made to Department for Communities and Local Government 'Open and Accountable Local Government'- A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government.

PROCEDURES

- Statement to be included at the start of each meeting by the Chairman presiding to state that anyone attending the meeting could be filmed, audio recorded or blogged, tweeted. (Also included at the top of agendas).
- People in attendance will be asked to make themselves known to the PC if they intend on filming, etc, which will help the PC to make any relevant facilities available to them. It is not unlawful for someone to record, film etc without notifying the Parish Council.
- The Council will ask those recording proceedings, not to edit the film/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 lack of respect towards those being filmed or recorded.
- Persons in attendance such as children or vulnerable people or people who do not wish to be filmed etc can make themselves known to the Chairman before the meeting commences, and a facility made available so that people can choose to sit and be screened away from the main body of the meeting should they wish to stay. If this is provided, it needs to be noted that it is not unlawful for someone to still film these persons if they are in the vicinity of the meeting room, subject to data protection Act, however the Chairman will need to take a balanced view if such actions are deemed to be disruptive to the course of business being conducted by the LPC.
- Notices to be erected in a conspicuous place so that persons entering the room know that they may be recorded, filmed etc, and list of requirements should persons want to record, film etc. To include, that any person or organisation choosing to film, record or broadcast any meeting of the Parish Council or committee is responsible for any claims or other liability from them so doing.
- Any decisions made by delegated powers by the Officer in attendance may also be filmed, audio recorded etc, and any such actions should be recorded in the minutes or other written record.