



PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF RECORDING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT PUBLIC MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

Summary of document

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to anyone wishing to take photographs or make audio/visual recording of any Council meeting which is held in public.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 came into force on 6th August 2014. These regulations allow any member of the public or an elected member who wishes to film, audio-record, take photographs and use social media such as tweeting and blogging, to report the proceedings of any meeting that is open to the public. Oakham Town Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it conducts its main decision-making meetings and has therefore developed a protocol to assist its citizens in this activity.

2.0 RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS

a) Access

To facilitate access to Council meetings, a designated area for those wishing to record proceedings will be made available. This area is directly adjacent to the press table which provides an unfettered view of the meeting. Although there is no requirement to notify the Council in advance of the intention to record a meeting; we respectfully ask those who are wishing to bring large equipment to a meeting, to contact us in advance so that necessary arrangements can be made to accommodate this. The positioning of equipment is solely under the chairman of the meeting's discretion.

In order to prevent accidents, the Council regrets it is unable to allow anyone undertaking recordings to use electric plug sockets in meetings for their equipment.

b) Open meetings

Access to record proceedings is only available to meetings, which are open to the public. In limited defined circumstances, for example when confidential or exempt items are discussed, some meetings may need to be held in private or move to a private session during the meeting. In these cases, recording will not be permitted as the public will be excluded for the relevant part of the meeting.

c) Commentary

Any person can provide written commentary during a meeting, as well as oral commentary outside or after the meeting. Oral commentary is not permitted during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order to the meeting. Although the Council supports the principles of freedom of speech, this should be exercised with personal and social responsibility and be operated within the law of the land. The Council requests those participating not to edit recordings, film or photographs in any way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings.

d) Disruption

Anyone wishing to record a meeting, who acts in a disruptive manner, may be at risk of expulsion. Examples where this may be considered are:

- Moving outside the areas designated for recording 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
- Asking for people to repeat statements for the purpose of recording
- Attempting to use electric plug sockets for their equipment

e) Impact on meeting attendees

It is important that members of the public, who are seated in the public area, are not photographed/filmed/recorded without their consent.

However, if a member of the public asks a question, presents a petition or makes a representation, then they are likely to be filmed and are deemed to have given their consent in these circumstances.

All meeting agendas, which are published on the Council's website in advance of a public meeting, will include a paragraph on the possibility of a meeting being recorded.

3.0 CONTACT DETAILS

Anyone wishing to discuss this facility in further detail can contact the Clerk on 01572 723627 or email at enquiries@oakhamtowncouncil.gov.uk