

Policy on Recording and Reporting on Public Meetings

This section was approved by Council on 18/09/14

Application

This policy applies to all public meetings of Leicester City Council, with the exception of meetings of the Licensing Sub Committees which are held under different meeting Regulations. The policy does not apply to meetings which aren't public meetings of the local authority, for example education appeal hearings.

Key Principles

- Leicester City Council is committed to transparency and supports efforts to record and share reports of proceedings of public meetings through a variety of means, including social media as a further means to encourage public interest and engagement.
- In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 persons and press attending any meeting of the Council open to the public are allowed to record and/or report all or part of that meeting. This includes filming, audio-recording, photographing or any other means for enabling people not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting at the same time as it takes place or later. The Council will provide reasonable facilities (such as space to view and hear the meeting, seats and a desk etc) to enable them to do so, as far as is practical.
- The aim of the Regulations and of the Council's policy is to encourage public interest and engagement so in recording or reporting on proceedings members of the public are asked:
 - ✓ to respect the right of others to view and hear debates without interruption;
 - ✓ to ensure that the sound on any device is fully muted and intrusive lighting avoided;
 - ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
 - ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.
- Where objections to being filmed arise (with the exception of the situations described in paragraph 3b below) the Chair of the meeting will operate from the principle that those members of the public who attend a public meeting in order to actively participate should expect to be recorded / reported, whereas those who attend merely to observe should have the right not to be recorded / reported.

- Recording and reporting should not be disruptive to the meeting (such as preventing others viewing and listening to the meeting such as asking people to repeat statements for the purposes of filming, intrusive lighting, excessive noise in setting up or re-siting equipment or moving to areas outside those designated for the public). Acting in a disruptive manner could result in expulsion from the meeting.

Further Guidance

1. The Regulations allow an individual or organisation to report and/ or provide non-verbal commentary on a public meeting making it available to others not present.
2. Individuals or organisations intending to record and/ or report on a public meeting are asked to notify the relevant Democratic Support Officer (as listed on the meeting agenda) in advance of the meeting to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place.
3. If notification of an intention to record / report all or part of a meeting has been received the Chair will make an announcement accordingly at the start of the meeting.
 - a. If a member of the public present indicates that they do not wish to be recorded then the Chair will ask the individual/ organisation to refrain from filming/ audio-recording/ photographing them.
 - b. If a person with known learning disabilities or mental health issues is expected to be speaking at the meeting then there will be a need to ensure that they have given informed consent. If a young person will be speaking at the meeting then parental consent should be sought for them to be filmed / recorded / photographed. The Chair will decide if this has been achieved and if not, request that recording does not take place while they are speaking.
4. Those recording and/ or reporting on public meetings should be aware of and abide by the following points:
 - a. Unless agreed otherwise in advance of the meeting, recording and reporting must take place from the public seating area and should be overt and focused on those speaking at the meeting.
 - b. The use of flash photography or additional lighting is not allowed unless it has been discussed in advance and agreement reached on how it can be done without disruption to the meeting.
5. Individuals and organisations recording a meeting are asked to respect any requests from external contributors/ members of the public to the meeting to suspend recording while they are speaking/ to not record them.
6. Recording is not allowed:
 - a. when the meeting has agreed to formally exclude the press and public due to the nature of business discussed. Filming / recording

equipment should not be left in the meeting room during private sessions.

- b. if the meeting has been suspended.
 - c. If the Chair determines that it has not been possible to obtain informed consent from a person with known learning disabilities or mental health issues; or parental consent for a young person speaking (see paragraph 5 above) then any recording of these individuals is not allowed.
7. Oral reporting or oral commentary on a meeting as it takes place is not allowed. Oral commentary should take place outside or after the meeting.
 8. The Council expects that recording will not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings.
 9. Individuals and organisations recording/ reporting on a meeting must respect the law and will be responsible for any allegations of breaches of law which may result from their actions.
 10. The Council allows such reporting/ recording to take place only in accordance with its legal obligations and takes no responsibility for, nor will accept any liabilities for, any filmed/ recorded/ photographed material made by any persons or its subsequent use or publication.

Any queries regarding this policy should initially be directed to John Thorpe, Democratic and Members Support Manager.

Telephone: 0116 454 6351

Email: john.thorpe@leicester.gov.uk

Further guidance is also available in the DCLG publication 'Open and accountable local government', August 2014