

Recording and Reporting Public Council Meetings

Rules for filming, audio recording, photography and
social media at Daventry District Council meetings

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1. Introduction

Daventry District Council welcomes the use of modern communications methods at its public meetings – such as filming, audio recording and the use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook – to encourage openness and transparency of Council business.

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

This document sets out rules and guidelines for allowing this at Daventry District Council's public meetings, in accordance with this legislation.

All meetings to which these rules apply are recorded by the Council as a matter of course. Recordings are available to listen on the website at <http://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/audio> and via our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/daventrydc>

2. Public meetings at Daventry District Council

Daventry District Council's public meetings are open for members of the press and public to attend where they can film, audio-record, photograph or use social media should they wish to do so. They include:

- Appeals and Standards Committee
- Corporate Governance Committee
- Council
- Licensing Committee
- Planning Committee
- Scrutiny and Improvement Committee
- Strategy Group.

Other meetings which may be subject to public proceedings include hearing panels and task panels.

During these meetings, there may be occasions where recording or reporting is not permitted and members of the Press and Public are asked to leave under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act – this is when the committee or meeting considers matters involving exempt or confidential information. Members of the press and public in attendance will be notified at the meeting when this exclusion takes place.

3. Private Council meetings

Members of the public are only permitted to film, audio-record or report on social media the proceedings of Daventry District Council's public meetings and the rules in this document do not apply to private meetings, such as political group meetings and officer working groups, as these do not make formal Council decisions.

4. Filming and photography

4.1 Notifying the Council

Although prior permission for filming public meetings is not required, anyone wishing to do so is encouraged to contact the Council in advance, so that the authority can ensure that all the necessary arrangements are in place.

In particular those intending to bring large equipment, or wishing to discuss arrangements, are advised to contact the Council's Governance Service on 01327 871100 at least 24 hours before the meeting takes place.

To minimise potential for disruption to the meeting, the use of flash photography is not permitted. Additional lighting will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances with prior permission by the Council.

4.2 Filming individuals

Notices will be clearly displayed at the entrance to public meetings advising the following:
'Please note that filming, recording or photography may take place at this meeting when the public and press are not lawfully excluded.'

Members of the public who actively object to being filmed need to be aware of the new rules and it cannot be guaranteed that they will not be within camera shot of others who may be filming proceedings.

4.3 Facilities for filming

Any filming, recording or photography of meetings is only permitted from the Public Seating Areas.

Meetings or parts of meetings from which the press and public are excluded may not be filmed or recorded (see item 2 for more information). For this purpose recording equipment must not be left unattended at meetings. The Council cannot accept liability for any equipment that is lost, stolen or damaged at its public meetings.

4.4 Sound issues

All attendees, including members of the press and public, councillors and officers, must ensure that their mobile devices, tablets and other electronic devices are switched onto 'silent' mode throughout the meeting. This should include all web applications as well as ringtones.

Oral commentary of the meeting, such as voiceovers for filming and recording purposes, is not permitted whilst the meeting is taking place as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.

Excessive noise in recording, moving around or setting up equipment whilst the meeting is taking place is not permitted and may result in suspension or termination of these activities by order of the Chairman of the meeting.

5. Social media and audio recordings

Daventry District Council welcomes the use of audio recording and social media reporting tools, such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook, at its public meetings, provided these activities are carried out in a non-disruptive manner.

All devices, such as tablets and mobile phones, must be switched onto silent mode for the duration of the meeting, including all apps, notification tools and ringtones.

Members of the Press and Public wishing to record audio or provide online written commentary can only do so within the Public Seating Area.

Oral commentary of the meeting, such as voiceovers for recording purposes, is not permitted whilst the meeting is taking place as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.

Meetings or parts of meetings from which the press and public are excluded may not be audio-recorded (see item 2 for more information). For this purpose recording equipment should not be left unattended at meetings.

6. General guidance

6.1 Disruptive Behaviour

The Chair of the meeting has the absolute discretion to terminate or suspend the filming or recording of proceedings if activities are carried out in a disruptive manner.

Circumstances might include moving to areas outside of the Public Seating Area to film or record without the consent of the Chair, excessive noise, approaching participants of the meeting to repeat statements, or refusing to cease recording or filming of members of the public who have requested not to be filmed.

6.2 Legal Responsibility

Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the laws of libel and defamation.

For more information on legal guidance relating to social media, visit the Crown Prosecution Service Website www.cps.gov.uk

6.3 Useful Contacts

- To view online Daventry District Council's schedule of public meetings, visit www.daventrydc.gov.uk/committees
- If you are a member of the public and require more information about Daventry District Council's public meetings, please contact the Council's Governance Service on 01327 302324 or email jfindlay@daventrydc.gov.uk
- If you are a member of the press, please contact DDC's Communications Service on 01327 302310, or email news@daventrydc.gov.uk