



# Recording of Parish Council Meetings

All meetings are open to the public except in limited defined circumstances where the national rules require or allow the meeting or part of the meeting to be closed to the public. The reason for excluding the public and press, usually because of discussions on tenders or staff issues, will be included in the agenda or explained at the meeting.

## **Can I film or audio-record the meeting?**

Yes, councils and other local government bodies are required to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film/video or audio-record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. Whilst no prior permission is required to carry out this activity if you are going to do so then please let the Clerk know prior to the start of the meeting so that any necessary arrangements can be made for example you may need to place a laptop on a table. As a matter of courtesy, to protect children, the vulnerable and other members of the public who actively object to being filmed, the Chairman would like to advise members of the public that recording is taking place and should they raise objections arrangements will be made for you to sit in front of them and you will be asked to respect their wishes not to be filmed.

## **Can I film or audio-record a private meeting?**

The rules on the use of communication methods, such as filming and audio-recording, only require local government bodies to allow the reporting of meetings open to the public not private meetings. You will not be allowed to leave recording equipment in the room where a private meeting is being held, nor when the parish council goes into closed session.

## **Can I tweet or blog a council or local government body meeting?**

Yes, the new rules allow for reporting of meetings via social media of any kind. Therefore bloggers, tweeters, and for example, Facebook, YouTube users and individuals with their own website, may report meetings.

The Council asks that those recording proceedings do not edit the film or recording in any way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings, or infringe on the core values of the Council.

## **What sort of facilities will the parish council provide?**

The council is required to provide reasonable facilities, subject to location and site, to facilitate reporting. This should include space to view and hear the meeting, seats, and ideally a desk.

## **If I am a councillor, can I tweet or blog during council meetings?**

The national rules do not prevent councillors from tweeting and blogging at meetings, so they should be able to do so provided it is not disruptive and does not detract from the proper conduct of the meeting. Whilst councillors are expected to comply with their body's code of conduct, this should not prevent councillors from tweeting or blogging when appropriate.

## **Are there any limits to what I can say in a tweet or video I publish?**

The law of the land applies – including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences. Freedom of speech within the law should also be exercised with personal and social responsibility – showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others.

## **Will I be able to provide commentary during the meeting?**

Any person can provide written commentary during a

meeting, as well as verbal commentary outside or after the meeting. The new rules do not permit verbal commentary to be provided during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting. You are also asked not to tweet or blog a discussion while it is in progress, that is before a decision is reached.

### **Can I be asked to leave a meeting because I'm taking photographs, filming or audio-recording the meeting or using social media?**

No. You are entitled to film, audio-record, take photographs or use social media as set out above but must not act in a disruptive manner. If you do so it could result in you being excluded from the meeting.

### **What is disruptive behaviour?**

Essentially, this could be any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of a meeting or impedes other members of the public being able to see, hear or record the proceedings. 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.

You may be excluded from a meeting if you act in a disruptive manner.

### **Can I leave recording equipment in a public meeting room and record without being present?**

There is no legal prohibition but in the interests of security of your equipment the parish council asks that if you leave the room at any point you take your valuables with you. Also

under the national rules, you may be required to stop any such recording if at any stage the meeting becomes a private meeting.

Any questions or queries should, where possible, be directed to the Clerk prior to the meeting  
Clerk@boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk      01634 861237

At the meeting any questions or queries should be directed to the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.

**If you do not wish to be filmed or recorded please make this known to the Clerk/Assistant Clerk and where possible alternative ways of presenting your views will be discussed with you.**