

# **PROTOCOL FOR RECORDING AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Protocol provides guidance to members of the public or press who wish to photograph or record proceedings at any of the Council's meetings.
- 1.2 The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in the way it conducts its meetings. Sound recording, photographing, filming, and use of social media at meetings which are held in public is permitted:
  - (a) subject to the provisions of this Protocol; and
  - (b) provided that the Lord Mayor/Chair is satisfied that it will not be disruptive or distracting to the good order and conduct of the meeting.
- 1.3 No restrictions will be placed on anyone using social media at a public meeting subject to the limitations regarding photography and audio/visual recording set out in this Protocol.
- 1.4 No audio/visual recording will be allowed during any parts of meetings where the press and public have been excluded during consideration of business which is confidential or exempt as defined by the Local Government Act 1972.
- 1.5 Meetings which take the form of hearings may not be suitable for recording due to the nature of some of the evidence given at the hearing. It will be at the Chair's discretion to determine whether the recording of a particular hearing will be permitted.
- 1.6 Failure to follow the provisions within this Protocol will result in the Lord Mayor/Chair refusing to allow the proceedings to be photographed or recorded.
- 1.7 For the purposes of this Protocol 'recording' includes sound recording, photographing, filming, and use of social media. Social media includes, but is not limited to Twitter, Facebook and blogs.

## **2. Before the meeting**

- 2.1 Those wishing to record proceedings at a meeting are advised to contact the Democratic Services Manager or his representative before the meeting and in no circumstances any later than noon on the day of the meeting so that arrangements can be discussed and the agreement of the Lord Mayor/Chair can be sought.
- 2.2 The name, organisation (if applicable) and contact details of the person wishing to record proceedings are required and should be provided before the meeting if possible.

### **3. At the meeting**

- 3.1 Notices will be displayed in the meeting room advising that proceedings may be recorded, and the Lord Mayor/Chair will make an announcement to this effect at the beginning of the meeting if a request has been received.
- 3.2 Members of the public attending a meeting to ask a question, present a petition or make a representation will be deemed to have given consent to being photographed or recorded. Only in exceptional circumstances, which must have been discussed with the Democratic Services Manager and Lord Mayor/Chair before the meeting, will applications not to be photographed or recorded be considered. Such circumstances could include protection of the individual's identity due to court proceedings etc.
- 3.3 Members of the public seated in the public seating area who actively object, should not be photographed, filmed or recorded as long as this does not undermine the broader transparency of the meeting.
- 3.4 Photography or filming must take place from a fixed position in the meeting room approved by the Lord Mayor/Chair to ensure that the view of Councillors, officers, public and press, is not obstructed and so as not to disrupt the business of the meeting.
- 3.5 The use of flash photography or additional lighting will only be permitted if agreed in advance with the Democratic Services Manager and the Lord Mayor/Chair.
- 3.6 Photography or audio/visual recording will be stopped if the Lord Mayor/Chair feels it is disrupting or inhibiting the meeting in any way or any pre-meeting agreement has been breached.
- 3.7 If someone refuses to stop recording when requested to do so the Lord Mayor/Chair will ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave, the Lord Mayor/Chair will adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption.
- 3.8 Anyone asked to leave a meeting because they have refused to comply with the Lord Mayor/Chair's request to do so, could be refused permission to record future meetings.

### **4. After the meeting**

- 4.1 Photographs and audio/visual recordings must not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing the views being expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being photographed or recorded.
- 4.2 Anyone making such recordings publicly available should consider any potential data protection and human rights implications of individuals they have recorded.
- 4.3 If someone fails to comply with this Protocol the Lord Mayor/Chair can refuse to allow this person to record any future meetings.
- 4.4 The responsibility for how any photographs or audio/visual recording is used rests with the person who made the recording and not the Council.

(Amended June 2023)

**Notes:**

Whether or not you are able to attend a meeting, you can make use of these facilities currently available:

- Free public WiFi in the Civic Centre and committee rooms. User name: public password: customer access
- Free access to public agendas, meeting and councillor information, minutes, decision details at [www.exeter.gov.uk/committees](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/committees)
- Free iPad and Android apps for reading and annotating public agendas and minutes: search [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#) for “mod.gov”
- Follow Exeter City Council on Twitter [@ExeterCouncil](#) and like at [facebook.com/ExeterCityCouncil](https://facebook.com/ExeterCityCouncil)

If you have any questions please contact Democratic Services (Committees) 01392 265111.

Members of the press are asked to contact the Media Relations Officer on 01392 265103.