

Filming, Photography and Audio Recording at council meetings

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency; it allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also allows the use of social networking websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

As a courtesy to the public, staff and councillors, the Council needs to be given reasonable notice, in advance of the meeting, if filming or photography is to take place. The Business Manager (Democratic Services) should be notified of any intention to record, film or photograph a meeting, before the start of the meeting, and will then inform the relevant Committee Chairman of what is to take place. Please contact: committee.services@suffolk.gov.uk; Tel: 01473 265119.

Where the Council has been so notified, the Chairman will, at the beginning of the relevant meeting, make an announcement that the meeting will be filmed, recorded or photographed and will ask if anyone (other than councillors) objects to this.

It should be noted that the Chairman of a meeting will have absolute discretion to terminate or suspend any of the above activities if, in their opinion, continuing to do so would prejudice the running of the meeting. The circumstances in which termination or suspension might occur could include:

- public disturbance, disruption or suspension of the meeting.
- the meeting agreeing to formally exclude the press and public from the meeting due to the exempt/confidential nature of the business being discussed, in accordance with statutory procedures.
- where it is considered that continued recording/photography/filming/webcasting might infringe the rights or privacy of any individual (including staff members) or intimidate them.
- for any other reason which the Chairman considers reasonable in the circumstances.

In allowing recording, filming or photography to take place, the Council requires those participating not to edit the recordings, film or photographs in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being photographed, filmed or recorded. Doing so may lead to restrictions on access to record, film or photograph future meetings. Any restrictions would be decided by the Monitoring Officer.

Unless given permission by the Chairman, councillors should not record, photograph or film other councillors, staff or members of the public during a meeting.

Those intending to bring large equipment or wishing to discuss any special requirements, are advised to contact the Council's Democratic Services Team in advance of the meeting to seek advice and guidance. Any filming or photography must take place from a fixed point, normally in the public gallery. The use of flash photography or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed in advance of the meeting and agreement reached on how it can be done without disrupting proceedings. Filming elsewhere in the building outside of the meeting room is not permitted without permission.

Notice of the filming/recording/broadcasting of meetings will be displayed in and outside the place of meeting and meeting agendas will include the following:

“The Council, members of the public and the press may record/film/photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Committee Clerk (in advance) who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.”

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 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation and the laws of libel and defamation.