



POLICY AND PROTOCOL ON RECORDING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Petersfield Town Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it carries out its business whenever possible. It will therefore seek to provide reasonable facilities to allow anyone who wishes to do so to record meetings of the Council and its committees that are open to the public. Anyone can therefore film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media such as tweeting and blogging to report the meeting when it is open to the public.
- 1.2 The Council does however expect that anyone filming, audio-recording, taking photographs, or using social media will do so in a way that does not disrupt the meeting and does not involve filming those members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed. The use of flash photography is not permitted due to it being likely to become a distraction and annoyance.
- 1.3 As oral reporting or commentary on a meeting as it takes place by anyone who is present at the meeting would be disruptive the Council does not allow this. Anyone can however provide an oral report or commentary outside or after the meeting.
- 1.4 The Council does not permit anyone to report on a meeting using methods which can be used without that person being present at the meeting and which enable persons not present at the meeting to see or hear the proceedings at the meeting as it takes place.

2 PROTOCOL

- 2.1 The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance, particularly for members of the press and the public, on the filming, taking of photographs and the audio recording of any Council meeting which is held in public.

- 2.2 The protocol also refers to the use of “social media” at meetings and makes clear that there are no restrictions placed on anyone at the meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar “social media” provided that the Chairman does not consider their actions are disrupting the meeting.
- 2.3 The Council will not vet those who want to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting. It would help us however in providing reasonable facilities if anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting were to notify the Town Clerk of their intention not later 24 hours before the meeting.
- 2.4 Irrespective of whether the Town Clerk has been notified, anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting should on arrival at the meeting inform the Clerk who is present at the meeting.
- 2.5 The Clerk will then tell the person what facilities the Council can make available for them to use. This will usually mean that they are provided with space to view and hear the meeting, a seat, and possibly a desk, although the latter cannot be guaranteed due to the size of the Council Meeting Room.
- 2.6 If a request has been received to take photographs or to audio or visually record a particular meeting, notices to this effect will be prominently displayed inside and outside of the Council Meeting Room advising members of the public that other members of the public and the press may be recording the meeting and if they do not wish to be filmed or be photographed, they should inform the Town Clerk before the meeting begins. Failure to register an objection before the meeting begins will be taken to indicate their consent to being filmed or photographed. The Town Clerk will advise those wanting to film or take photographs of the objection.
- 2.7 In accordance with Council Standing Orders, the Chairman may require anyone who is filming, taking photographs, audio recording or using social media to record the meeting to leave the meeting if their activities disrupt or disturb the meeting. Examples of acts or activities that are likely to disrupt or disturb a meeting include:
 - a. moving around the Council Chamber whilst filming;
 - b. excessive noise in recording or setting up of the equipment;
 - c. intrusive lighting or use of flash photography;
 - d. asking for people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording;
 - e. filming or taking photographs of members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed or photographed;
 - f. intrusive filming of a specific individual or individuals;
 - g. providing any oral commentary whilst recording the meeting.

- 2.8 The right to film, record etc. is limited to the duration of the meeting. Recording must not start until the meeting is called to order by the Chairman and must cease when the Chairman closes the meeting.
- 2.9 Filming or recording equipment cannot be left running in the meeting room at times when the public is excluded (for example because of confidential information being discussed).
- 2.10 The Council does not permit film or audio recordings to be edited in any way before transmission to prevent the possible misrepresentation of proceedings.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA

- 3.1 Social media can be used at Council meetings provided that the Chairman does not consider its use is disrupting the proceedings of the meeting. If the Chairman considers that use of social media is disrupting proceedings, the person(s) using social media may be required to stop doing so.
- 3.2 If use of social media continues after the Chairman has requested that it cease then the meeting may be adjourned by the Chairman and other appropriate arrangements made for the meeting to continue without disruption.

4 FURTHER INFORMATION

- 4.1 Please contact the Town Hall (admin@petersfield-tc.gov.uk)
- 4.2 The Government has also published a plain English guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government.