



## Watford Borough Council

### Protocol on filming / photography / audio recording / reporting at council meetings

Watford Borough Council is committed to promoting an active, cohesive and well informed town. This includes being open and transparent in the way we conduct our decision making.

Council meetings are open to the public enabling people to see for themselves how decisions are made. In recent years, the advances in audio / visual technology and the use of social media (such as tweeting / blogging) have meant that there are a range of other means by which people might access, and report on, council meetings.

In recognition of this, Watford Borough Council has developed this protocol to assist those wishing to film / photograph / record and report on meetings.

The protocol recognises the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Department for Communities and Local Government's guidance to local authorities (July 2014<sup>1</sup>- currently in draft) regarding the public and the press attending and reporting on council meetings.

### Watford Borough Council: filming / photographing / recording and reporting council meetings

Any member of the public can photograph, film, audio-record and report on the council's public meetings.

While no prior permission is required, it is advisable that you let us know if you wish to film, photograph or audio-record a public meeting. This is important because the government rules require us to provide reasonable facilities for any member of the public to report on meetings.

#### 1. Advising if you wish to film / photograph / record / a council meeting

If you intend to film / photograph / record a meeting it would be helpful if you let our Democratic Services team know on [LegalandDemocratic@watford.gov.uk](mailto:LegalandDemocratic@watford.gov.uk)

It would also be helpful if you include the following information so that we can make arrangements for you:

- Details of the meeting
- Name of person attending the meeting who wishes to film/photograph/record
- Part of the meeting to be recorded i.e. entire meeting, specific item
- Nature of recording being made – i.e. filming / photography / audio recording
- Equipment to be used (including lighting or flash photography)
- Any specific requirements
- Contact details for a response

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Open and accountable local government  
A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-and-accountable-local-government>

Democratic Services will inform the Chair of the meeting that a request has been made. This is so that the Chair can inform other members of the public attending the meeting (see 2 below).

## **2. Informing members of the public that the meeting is to be filmed / photographed / recorded**

- i)** Agendas will carry a brief statement saying that a meeting might be filmed / photographed / recorded

Any member of the public has the right to request not to be filmed / photographed / recorded and they should be given the opportunity to inform the Chair of this in advance of the meeting. Councillors and officers should expect to be filmed / photographed / recorded.

- ii)** A notice will be displayed at the meeting to confirm that it will be filmed / photographed / recorded and offering people the opportunity to let the Chair know before the start of the meeting if they wish to be excluded.

## **3. Conducting Meetings**

- i)** The Chair will advise if the meeting is to be filmed / photographed / recorded
- ii)** The Chair can stop or suspend the filming / photographing / recording if, in the opinion of the Chair, continuing to do so would be disruptive.

This could include:

- a.** Public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting
- b.** The filming / photographing / recording of the meeting is, in the opinion of the Chair, distracting from the meeting being conducted effectively (e.g. excessive noise, intrusive lighting, requesting people to repeat comments)
- c.** Exclusion of public and press being moved and supported in line with the council's constitution – such as exempt or confidential agenda items
- d.** The filming of people at the meeting who, in the opinion of the Chair, have objected to being filmed

## **4. Tweeting and blogging a meeting**

You are free to report meetings via social media of any kind, including through blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and your own website.

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.

## Agenda Front Sheets and Signage at Meetings

1. The following message appears on each agenda for all council meetings

### **FILMING / PHOTOGRAPHY / RECORDING / REPORTING**

Please note: this meeting might be filmed / photographed / recorded / reported by a party other than Watford Borough Council for subsequent broadcast or publication.

If you do not wish to have your image / voice captured you should let the Chair or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

2. The following signs will be displayed inside and outside the meeting room.

### **FILMING / PHOTOGRAPHY / RECORDING / REPORTING NOTICE**

Please note: this meeting might be filmed, photographed, recorded or reported for subsequent broadcast or publication.

Therefore, by attending the meeting, you are consenting to being filmed (or photographed or recorded) and to the possible use of the images and/ or sound recordings. If you do not wish to have your image / voice captured you should let the Chair or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

### **Disclaimer**

In allowing filming / photographing / recording being carried out the council accepts no liability for the content, distribution or adaptation of the material obtained by third parties