

Sevenoaks Town Council

Protocol for the recording or reporting of Council and Committee meetings

The right to record and report on meetings of the Council, its committees, sub committees and any joint committees is established under the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014. This is in addition to the rights of the press and public to attend such meetings.

Recording for the purposes of this document is defined as: Video recording, audio recording, photography.

Reporting for the purposes of this document is defined as: Tweeting, blogging, broadcasting video or audio streams, or any other mechanism which allows those not physically present at the meeting to follow the course of debate.

Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making process and will support the right of members of the public to record and report on meetings subject to the following protocol being followed:

1. As a matter of courtesy Sevenoaks Town Council would request that members of the public intending to record a meeting inform the Town Clerk of their intention at the earliest possible opportunity to enable adequate facilities to be put in place.
2. Members of the public present at meetings will be notified that recording of the meeting may be taking place. This will be noted on the agenda, on signage, and by the Chairman at the beginning of the meeting.
3. Members of the public attending meetings may put a request to the Clerk or Chairman that they not be recorded, Sevenoaks Town Council would expect any member of the public recording a meeting to respect and comply such a request. To this end, Sevenoaks Town Council request that any recording of a meeting be overt i.e. clearly recognisable to anyone present at the meeting.
4. The right to record is limited to the duration of the meeting. Therefore recording must not start until the meeting is called to order, and must cease when the Chairman closes the meeting. Members of the public putting forward a question under the "Public Question Time" heading may request that their representation not be recorded.
5. If it is resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting under Sevenoaks Town Council standing order 1(c) then all recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room.
6. The member of the public recording a meeting must not at any time leave recording equipment unattended.
7. The right of members of the public to record or report on the proceedings of a meeting does not override Sevenoaks Town Council Standing Order 10(a), if a member of the public in the process of recording or reporting on a meeting is considered by the Chairman to be obstructing or disrupting the transaction of business at a meeting, behaving offensively, or improperly they may be asked to cease recording or reporting and/or be excluded from the meeting.
8. The following would be considered as disruptive behaviour (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - a. Requests for statements to be repeated for the purpose of the recording
 - b. Leaving the designated area
 - c. Excessive noise, lighting, or flash photography
 - d. Oral commentary
 - e. Recording other members of the public without their consent

9. Sevenoaks Town Council will allow access to its WIFI network for internet access on request subject to there being no disruption to other users of the network.
10. For health and safety reasons Sevenoaks Town Council will not provide access to power sockets.
11. Recording and reporting on meetings are subject to the law, and it is the sole responsibility of the member of the public carrying out the recording or reporting to ensure they are compliant with relevant acts, including but not limited to the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act, and the laws of libel and defamation.
12. Sevenoaks Town Council would not expect the editing or manipulation of any recording which would misrepresent the proceedings of a meeting, or misrepresent the Town Council's values, or shows a lack of respect for those in the recording.
13. Sevenoaks Town Council will have no liability for material recorded or published by any other person.
14. Sevenoaks Town Council may record or report on meetings itself, and when doing so will be bound by this protocol.
15. Sevenoaks Town Council is not responsible or liable for the actions of any person recording or reporting on the proceedings of a meeting which identifies a member of the public or records them without their consent.
16. Councillors who wish to record or report on the proceedings of a meeting will also be bound by this protocol.
17. The minutes of a meeting remain the statutory and legally binding formal record of council decisions.

Approved at Council on 6th October 2014