

Guidelines for members of the public attending public meetings

On 6 August, 2014 the government introduced new regulations relating to Council meetings and citizen's access to information.

The full legislation is available on line at: [The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014](#).

Previous legislation had afforded members of the public the same rights as accredited journalists to report on proceedings via online media, for example blogs, twitter, other social networking sites and hyperlocal news forums. The new regulations now allow members of the public to photograph, film or audio-record the proceedings of public council meetings.

All Chesterfield Borough Council meetings are open to the public and press to attend except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed. The majority of business however is transacted in public. Agendas and reports for all council and committee meetings are made available to the public five days in advance. Minutes and details of decisions are also published on our website once available.

Where decisions are likely to be taken in private this will be indicated on the agenda of the meeting. In addition, for decisions of Cabinet to be taken in private 28 days notice of those decisions will be given in the Forward Plan. Anyone wishing to make representations about why a decision should not be taken in private may do so by contacting Democratic Services at least 5 clear days before the meeting at which the decision is to be taken.

Responsibilities of the Council

- The Council will publish a notice of a meeting dealing with a key decision matter on the website 28 days before the meeting is held. This notice is called the Forward Plan. The document will explain the key decision to be made plus any related documents and how to access these documents.
- In the case of a 'special urgency decision' where 28 days notice cannot be given, the Council will publish a notice to explain the reasons why.
- The Council will justify the decision to hold any meeting or part of a meeting in private and allow the public to make representation against this decision.

- For members of the public attending a meeting for the purpose of reporting the proceedings, the Council will provide, as far as practicable, reasonable facilities.

Responsibilities of the Public

By attending a public meeting of the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Member, you are agreeing to these guidelines as a whole and in particular the stipulations listed below:

- You are welcome to attend a public meeting to report proceedings, either in 'realtime' or after conclusion of the meeting, on a blog, social networking site, news forum or other online media.
- You may use a laptop, tablet device, smartphone or any other device to film, photograph, take audio-recordings or make written transcript of proceedings during the meeting.
- You must not interrupt proceedings and digital gadgets must be set to 'silent' mode.
- Any person whose behaviour threatens to disrupt orderly conduct will be asked to leave.
- Be aware that libelous comments against the Council, individual Councillors or officers could result in legal action being taken against you.
- Personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability status could also result in legal action being taken against you.

The Council regards failing to comply with any of the guidelines above as a risk to the orderly conduct of a meeting. The Council therefore reserves the right to refuse entry, to any further Council meetings, to any person who breaches any of these requirements.

It is possible that you may be filmed or photographed by other members of the public when attending council meetings. This is outside of the Council's control.