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Central Bedfordshire Council protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings

Central Bedfordshire Council welcomes interest by the media in council meetings as an essential element of the democratic process and in the interests of openness and transparency.

This protocol therefore aims to support and facilitate media coverage of council meetings while ensuring that this does not disrupt council business.

Audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings

Audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings is allowed only by accredited members of the media and subject to certain restrictions and prior agreement from the chair of the meeting.

Requests from members of the media should be made to the council's communications team as soon as possible in advance of the meeting.

The Communications Team will seek to arrange for the filming to take place with the consent of the chairman of the relevant committee. If for any reason, permission is refused, the reasons for this will be provided to the journalist.

The following provisions will apply:

1. Any audio/visual recording/ photography must take place from the public areas of the meeting room. Filming will be from a fixed camera position in normal view.
2. Setting up, including cameras and additional lighting, should take place before the meeting starts to ensure the view of members, officers, public and media representatives is not obstructed.
3. The time at which the audio/visual recording/ photography takes place should be approved by the chairman;
4. The chairman has the authority to withdraw permission for recording at any time if he or she feels the audio/visual recording/photography is disrupting the meeting in any way and the operator of the equipment will be asked to stop. Anyone undertaking audio/visual recording/ photography will be expected to comply with any requests made by the chairman of the meeting;

Advising meeting attendees of recording/photography

The Communications Team will ensure that signs that are put in place before the meeting starts. These will advise attendees that filming/ recording/ photography is by a third party and that the Council has no control over where it may appear (for example posted on the internet). Where sufficient advance

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warning of filming and/or recording is available, notification of this activity will be included in the agenda for the relevant meeting.

During the meeting

1. The chairman will announce at the beginning of the meeting that permission to film/ record/ photograph has been requested and permitted. The chairman will ask those members of the public present whether they agree to be filmed/ recorded/ photographed and at this point those present can choose to move.
2. If the chairman feels the audio/visual recording/ photography is disrupting the meeting in any way or any pre-meeting agreement has been breached the operator of the equipment will be required to stop.
3. If someone filming, recording or taking photographs refuses to stop when requested to do so; the chairman will ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave, the chairman may adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption. The chairman of the meeting has a right to withdraw consent to film/ record/ photograph at any time. If consent is withdrawn the reasons for this will be given.
4. Any decision taken by the chairman on the interpretation of this protocol is final.

Media and public exclusion

The media may only be excluded from a meeting in respect of business relating to confidential or exempt information if a resolution is passed under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972. The media and public will be told about the nature of the exclusion relating to the business to be discussed. No filming/ recording/ photography will be permitted during this exclusion. All cameras, recording and sound equipment must be removed from the meeting room.

Public requests for recordings of council business

Should a member of the public wish to request a recording of a council meeting held within the Council Chamber at Priory House, Chicksands, it may be possible to arrange this. Whilst the Council does not routinely record and broadcast its meetings, the Council Chamber at Chicksands is fitted with audio-visual recording equipment which can be activated on request.

However, advance notice to the council's Democratic Services Team will be required at least three working days before the council meeting to enable the equipment to be set up. The recording will be provided to the member of the public on the next working day following the meeting subject to a signed

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agreement which ensures the audio/visual record/ photographs will not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings.

As with any filming or recording by a member of the media, advance notice of the use of the Council's own equipment to record proceedings would be given by the chairman, for the information of the public and councillors.