

# **Guidance for the recording of Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings**

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this guidance is to help any members of the press and public who wish to film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media (for example, 'tweeting' and 'blogging'), to report the proceedings of all meetings of Cheltenham Borough Council that are open to the public.

## **2. Do I need to ask permission to record meetings?**

There is no requirement to ask permission to record a meeting. However, any person wishing to carry out this activity is requested to let Democratic Services (contact details below) know in advance so that all necessary arrangements can be made for the meeting.

## **3. Can I tweet or blog a meeting?**

Yes, you may report meetings via social media of any kind. Therefore, bloggers, tweeters, Facebook and YouTube users, and individuals with their own website, are able to report meetings.

## **4. Can I provide commentary during the meeting?**

Any person can provide written commentary during a meeting, as well as oral commentary outside or after the meeting. It is not permitted for oral commentary to be provided during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.

## **5. Can I be asked to leave a meeting and stop recording?**

The majority of Cheltenham Borough Council's meetings are open to members of the public. However, meetings cannot be recorded when it is agreed to formally exclude the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential/exempt nature of the business to be discussed.

You will also be asked to leave a meeting if you act in a disruptive manner.

Examples of this can include:

- Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chairman,
- Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate/discussion,
- Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
- Asking for people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording.

## **6. Are there any limits about recording a meeting or what people can say in a tweet or recording?**

Cheltenham Borough Council requests that the public gallery/seating area is not filmed and that you respect the wishes of members of the public who have come to speak at a meeting but do not wish to be filmed.

More generally the law of the land applies – including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences (see the Crown Prosecution Service guidance on social media). Freedom of speech within the law should also be exercised with personal and social responsibility – showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others. Cheltenham Borough Council asks those recording proceedings not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings, or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule, or show a lack of respect towards those being filmed/ recorded.

**7. Can I leave recording equipment in a public meeting room and record without being present?**

This can take place; however, any such recording would have to stop if at any stage the meeting became a private meeting. It is therefore suggested that the person doing the recording remains in the meeting. Cheltenham Borough Council takes no responsibility for any unsupervised equipment.

**8. Further questions & Contact details**

If you have any questions on the issue of filming/recording of meetings please contact Democratic Services on 01242 77 4937 or email [democratic.services@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cheltenham.gov.uk).