



UTTOXETER TOWN COUNCIL

Press and Social Media Policy and Protocol

PRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PROTOCOL

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Utttoxeter Town Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it carries out its business, while protecting confidentiality where appropriate. It will therefore seek to provide reasonable facilities to allow anyone who wishes to do so to record meetings of the Council and its committees that are open to the public. Anyone can therefore film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media such as tweeting and blogging to report the meeting when it is open to the public.
- 1.2 The Council does however expect that anyone filming, audio-recording, taking photographs, or using social media, will do so in a way that does not disrupt the meeting and does not involve filming members of the public without their permission. The use of flash photography is not permitted due to it being likely to become a distraction and annoyance.
- 1.3 As oral reporting or commentary during a meeting by anyone who is present at the meeting would be disruptive, the Council does not allow this. Anyone can, however, provide an oral report or commentary outside or after the meeting.
- 1.4 The Council does not permit anyone to report on a meeting using methods which can be used without that person being present at the meeting and which enable persons not present at the meeting to see or hear the proceedings at the meeting as it takes place or later.
- 1.5 Any public comments on the Council's social media sites which are deemed by The Clerk or Office Manager to be offensive or personal will be deleted.

2. PROTOCOL ON PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- 2.1 The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance, particularly for members of the press and the public, on the filming, taking of photographs and the audio recording of any Council meeting which is held in public.
- 2.2 The protocol also refers to the use of social media at meetings and makes clear that other than mobile phones and devices being switched to 'silent' there are no restrictions placed on anyone at the meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar social media provided that the Chairman does not consider their actions are disrupting the meeting. If their actions are disruptive users will be requested to cease.
- 2.3 The Council will not vet those who want to film, audio-record, take photographs or use social media to report the meeting. It would help us however, in providing reasonable facilities if anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting were to notify the Clerk of their intention not later than 24 hours before the meeting.
- 2.4 Irrespective of whether the Clerk has been notified, anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting should, on arrival at the meeting, inform The Clerk who is present at the meeting.
- 2.5 The Clerk will then tell the person what facilities the Council can make available for them to use. This will usually mean that they are provided with space to view and hear the meeting, a seat and possibly a desk, although the latter cannot be guaranteed due to the size of the Council Meeting Room.

- 2.6 If an advance request has been received to take photographs or to audio visually record a particular meeting, notices to this effect will be prominently displayed inside and outside of the Council Meeting Room advising members of the public that other members of the public and the press may be recording the meeting and if they do not wish to be filmed or photographed, they should inform The Clerk before the meeting begins. Failure to register an objection before the meeting begins will be taken to indicate their consent to being filmed or photographed. The Clerk will advise those wanting to film or take photographs of the objection.
- 2.7 In accordance with Council Meeting Procedure Rule 17, the Chair may require anyone who is filming, taking photographs, audio recording or using social media to record the meeting to leave the meeting if their activities disrupt the meeting. Example of acts or activities that are likely to disrupt a meeting include:
- a) Moving to areas outside the area designated for the public without the consent of the Chair
 - b) Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate/discussion
 - c) Intrusive lighting or using flash photography
 - d) Asking for people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording
 - e) Filming or taking photographs of members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed or photographed.

3. PROTOCOL FOR COUNCILLOR USE OF MEDIA

- 3.1 Where Councillors wish to express a personal opinion, they must ensure that any such opinion does not infer that they are acting on behalf of the Town Council.
- 3.2 In instances where Town Councillors are also Borough or County Councillors, they should clearly define the capacity in which they are acting.
- 3.3 All press releases on behalf of the Council are to be administered or agreed by The Clerk.
- 3.4 All other forms of media releases, e.g. twitter, Facebook, blogs, letters to the press etc to be clearly Councillor's own property. Councillors should not use their title in any informal media communication.
- 3.5 Any Councillor who receives a phone call from a journalis
- 3.6 , asking for comments, should clarify that they are making the comments in a personal capacity or refer the journalist to The Clerk for the view of the Council.
- 3.7 In instances where Town Councillors are also Borough and/or County Councillors, they should refrain from commenting on Town Council matters by using the artifice of their other role.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 4.1 Please contact the Clerk (tina.jeffery@uttoxtc.org.uk)
- 4.2 The Government has also published a plain English guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of Local Government

Adopted by Council at its Annual Meetings held on 19 May 2015, 10 May 2016, 9 May 2017, 8 May 2018, 14 May 2019, 5 May 2021, 10 May 2022, 16 May 2023, 21 May 2024
Reviewed at Council's Annual Meeting held 13 May 2025