

# SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL – FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

## GUIDANCE FOR PRESS AND PUBLIC

### Recording of Meetings

The Council in support of the principles of openness and transparency allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public providing it is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings and a designated area will be provided for anyone who wishes to film part or all of the proceedings. No filming or recording will take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting. As a matter of courtesy to the public, anyone wishing to film or record proceedings is asked to provide reasonable notice to Mike Bryant, , County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY 01823 357628 [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) so that the Chair of the meeting can inform those present.

We would ask that, as far as possible, members of the public aren't filmed unless they are playing an active role such as speaking within a meeting and there may be occasions when speaking members of the public request not to be filmed.

The Council meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

### Members' Code of Conduct Requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: HONESTY; INTEGRITY; SELFLESSNESS; OBJECTIVITY; ACCOUNTABILITY; OPENNESS; LEADERSHIP. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Members' Code of Conduct](#)

## EXPLANATORY NOTES: QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS/PETITIONS BY THE PUBLIC

### General

Members of the public may ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council or may make a statement or present a petition – **by giving advance notice.**

## **Notice of questions/statements/petitions**

Prior submission of questions/statements/petitions is required in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer – Scott Wooldridge email: [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) by 5pm on Thursday 16 February. The Monitoring Officer may edit any question or statement in consultation with the author, before it is circulated, to bring it into an appropriate form for the Council.

In exceptional circumstances the Chair has discretion at meetings to accept questions/statements/ petitions without any prior notice.

## **Scope of questions/statements/petitions**

Questions/statements/petitions must: -

- (a) relate to a matter for which the County Council has a responsibility, or which affects the County,
- (b) not be defamatory, frivolous or offensive,
- (c) not be substantially the same as a question/statement/petition which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months and
- (d) not require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

The Monitoring Officer has discretion to reject any question that is not in accord with (a) to (d) above. The Monitoring Officer may also reject a statement or petition on similar grounds.

## **Record of questions/statement/petitions**

Copies of all representations from the public received prior to the meeting will be circulated to all members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting in the Chairman's Schedule, which will be distributed at the meeting. Full copies of representations and answers given will be set out in the minutes of the meeting.

## **Response to Petitions**

Normally the Council will refer any petition to an appropriate decision maker for response – see the [Council's Petition Scheme](#) for more details. The organiser will also be allowed 2 minutes at the meeting to introduce the petition and will receive a response from a relevant member (normally an Executive member).

If a petition organiser is not satisfied with the Council's response to the petition and the petition contains more than 5000 signatures (approximately 1% of Somerset's population) the petition organiser can request a debate at a meeting of the County Council itself. The Chair will decide when that debate will take place.