

THE OPENNESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014

As a member of the public you have the right to attend Town Council Meetings. They are advertised on the Southam Town Council website and on notice boards and notice of 3 clear days is given, as required under the legislation. Papers for the meetings are available in the Grange Hall in the week preceding the meeting.

By resolution, the Council can decide to meet in private to discuss confidential business or for other special reasons where publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. Items which would come under the heading of 'Confidential' include employee conduct, negotiations of contracts, terms of tender or legal information; this is not an exhaustive list.

Members of the public are permitted to take photographs, film and audio-record, tweet or blog the proceedings and report on all public meetings. Whilst no prior permission is required to carry out these activities, it is advisable to contact officers prior to the meeting so that any necessary arrangements can be made for the public meeting. This is important because the rules require town councils only to provide reasonable facilities for any member of the public to report on meetings and this may just be from a seat in the public gallery. Those filming should take care not to film members of the public who are not taking part in the meeting in particular children and vulnerable adults where the responsible adult has not given consent for them to be filmed.

When tweeting or blogging, the law of the land applies including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences. The new rules do not permit oral commentary during a meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.

The rules do not prevent the Chairman from excluding a member of the public to maintain orderly conduct or prevent genuine disruption of the meeting. You may be excluded from the meeting if you act in a disruptive manner. This would include

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

Recording equipment must not be left in the meeting room to record the private part of the meeting.

FULL DETAILS OF THE REGULATIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST