

PE1731/J

West Dunbartonshire council submission of 22 October 2019

- What is your policy on the audio recording of public council meetings?

West Dunbartonshire Council's current policy is as follows:

No sound, film, video tape, digital or photographic recording of the proceedings of any meeting shall be made without the prior written approval of the Council.

- If your council does not permit audio recordings of public meetings, what is the rationale for this?

This Council currently audio-streams full Council and all the main service committees via the internet therefore there is no requirement for any private recording to take place. However, if a member of public or a public broadcaster wants to record a council meeting which is not audio-streamed then permission needs to be granted by the Council in advance of the meeting being recorded. This is to ensure that whenever a meeting is recorded all participants in the meeting, some of whom who may not be elected officials or council officials, are made aware that the meeting will be recorded and therefore have the option to participate or not.

- What are considered to be the concerns of allowing members of the public to audio record public council meetings?

As stated above, there are often external participants including other members of public, who could be asked to speak at public meetings and therefore it is important that they are made aware of the recording in advance as failure to do so could lead of a breach of the Data Protection regulations.

- With regards to the actions being called for in the petition, are there any constraints faced by local authorities on what has been proposed?

We have particular concerns about the recording of regulatory meetings such as Licensing or Planning where council officers, elected members, applicants and objectors and/or their legal representative's may inadvertently say something which may be secretly recorded and used as evidence at a future appeal hearing or court action. It would not be fair for one party in any proceedings to have access to a recording while the other party relies upon written notes.