

Demonstrations at council meetings

The council recognises the importance of public engagement and the right to peaceful protest as fundamental principles of local democracy.

The council is committed to ensuring that its meetings are accessible, respectful and conducted in an orderly manner, balancing the rights of individuals to express their views with the need to maintain the integrity of council business.

Public statement

1. The council supports the right to peaceful protest.
 2. The council will provide opportunities for public participation at meetings.
 3. The council will not tolerate disruption of its meetings and will take action where that occurs.
 4. Where possible, we would request that demonstrators give notice where a large number of people will be attending the council offices (even if the demonstration is to take place outside), so officers can ensure that appropriate resources are in place, in line with appropriate health and safety recommendation
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Procedure for managing demonstrations at council meetings

General principles

1. Anyone may protest at council meetings, provided they do not interrupt or disrupt the meeting.
2. Where possible, we would request that demonstrators give notice where a large number of people will be attending the council offices (even if the demonstration is to take place outside), so officers can ensure that appropriate resources are in place. A risk assessment will be carried out in advance of the meeting if protests are expected. The risk assessment will be guided by this procedure note.
3. Materials that might present a risk to public safety or have the potential to disrupt the meeting, such as a loudhailer, are not permitted in the council chamber. Placards, banners and flags are not permitted.
4. Councillors are reminded that we are signed up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign. For councillors in the chamber, it is useful to remember to be respectful when expressing views as this can help set the tone for those observing.

What we tolerate

1. Peaceful protest outside or inside the meeting room, **as long as it does not disrupt proceedings.**
2. Demonstrators may observe the meeting quietly.
3. If demonstrators wish to congregate outside the meeting room, they are asked to leave access to the Chamber clear, to allow Members and the public to access/leave the premises.

What we do not tolerate

1. Interruptions, shouting, or any behaviour that disrupts the meeting.
2. Use of offensive or provocative language or materials.
3. Loudhailers or objects that could pose a safety risk (eg flagpoles).
4. Any attempt to intimidate councillors, officers or members of the public. Of at any point an officer or Member is concerned for their safety the Police may be called