

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-331/332
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/06202/11

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

10 October 2011

Thank you for your letter of 19th September.

Local authorities are obliged to allow the public entry to council meetings, unless the issues being discussed are deemed to be exempt (in the main, confidential or commercial matters). However the process that a local authority follows to allow the public access to meetings is a matter for the authority themselves, as they have to take into account the need for security in modern society.

I have placed on record my support for the principle of recording and broadcasting council meetings. Modern technology enables this possibility without prohibitive expense. It should be seen as a means of increasing public engagement with their local government. I would also encourage local authorities to allow members of the public to film their proceedings so long as, firstly, the members are aware that it is taking place and, secondly, that it can be done in a way that does not inconvenience other members of the public attending. However, I am not in favour of surreptitious filming. Nor do I have any plans to legislate on this matter.

With regard to the issue of local authority publishing details of their spending over £500, I support the key principles of openness and transparency however it is important to balance the delivery of these principles with the responsibility of each local authority to deploy its resources to provide the best value for money for its citizens and to be accountable to its local electorate for the decisions its makes.

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