

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2014  
title: OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE – MARSHAL SCOTT  
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## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Parish Councillors of a recently published guide for the press and public about attending and reporting Local Government meetings.
- 1.2 Of particular relevance to Parish Councils is section 4 of the guide which relates to Parish Council's and their meetings.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
  - Community Objectives -        }    The Council aims to be a well managed Council and seeks to ensure it operates in accordance with government guidance, and supports Parish Council by raising awareness of relevant changes to government guidance.
  - Corporate Priorities -         }
  - Other Considerations -        }

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 National rules governing Council's including Parish Councils have changed recently. A guide has been produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government which explains what the new rules will mean for members of the public who attend meetings of public bodies such as county, borough or parish councils.

## 3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The guide is split into 5 parts each with a different focus:
  - part 1 is about use of various communication tools for reporting the proceedings of any meeting of the local government body which is open to the public;
  - part 2 explains how the public can gain access to meetings of a Council Executive, its committees or sub-committees and records of executive decisions taken by individual members and officers;
  - Part 3 explains how the public can access all other meetings of a local government body other than Parish or Town Councils and records of certain other decisions taken by officers;
  - Part 4 specifically explains how the public can access meetings of Parish and Town Councils, Parish Meetings and records of certain decisions taken by the parish officers; and
  - Part 5 focusses on other rights that the public have to access information.

- 3.2 These new national regulations have increased the right to film, audio record, take photographs and use media such as tweeting and blogging to report meetings.
- 3.3 Prior permission for all these activities is no longer required but members of the public are advised that contact should be made with a Council where filming is proposed.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – No implications identified.
  - Technical, Environmental and Legal – Public bodies have a statutory duty to allow and enable the public to attend, report and record meetings.
  - Political – No implications identified.
  - Reputation – It will hopefully enhance the reputation of the Council if it encourages wider access to its meetings, particularly via modern communication methods.
  - Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

#### 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Government recognise the importance of public access to reports, meetings and minutes of public bodies.
- 5.2 Modern technology is being increasingly used to report and record what goes on at public meetings.
- 5.3 Public bodies need to be more aware and more amenable to requests for access.
- 5.4 Parish Councils may need to put arrangements in hand to provide greater access to agendas, minutes of meetings and Parish Council meetings.
- 5.5 Whilst the main points of the new regulations are summarised within this report the full document can be accessed on [www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg).

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#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Department of Communities and Local Government Open and Accountable Local Government Regulations.

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF: WA/CMS/PCLC/11 SEPT 2014