

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND MEMBER / OFFICER SAFETY

This policy is aimed at the Council and Committee Chairs but has relevance for all members and officers who may encounter intimidation because of public interaction or interruption of due process at meetings. Not only does disruptive behaviour by the public undermine due process and delay others speaking, but it can also cause disillusionment with the Council as a whole. Disruption can take several forms as below

- shouting
- swearing
- continual discussion in public gallery
- singing of songs in protest

Occasionally this is in the form of an allegation of misconduct, corruption or discrimination against a member or officer, not necessarily connected to an agenda item. The person should be advised by the Chair that the allegation is to be dealt with by the correct committee, Finance and General Purposes. If the person refuses the advice or continues to disrupt, they should read out the Formal Warning.

Disruption might also be *physical* in the form of violent or non-violent acts, such as gesticulation, intimidation or large groups holding placards that refuse to move or sit until their matter of concern is dealt with. Should this be the case, the Chair should read out the Formal Warning below. If the matter relates to an individual member or officer, it is for the person targeted to decide if they feel intimidated or not, and to report such matters to Hampshire Constabulary as it may be the start of a pattern of behaviour that escalates and could have been avoided. The use of mobile phones and recording equipment to record or film discussions is dealt with by separate policy.

It is at the Chair's discretion to decide during the meeting if the disruption was intended and may choose an informal warning, reminding that they are at a public meeting and further disruption will not be tolerated.

FORMAL WARNING

'Due to the disturbance caused by you, you are hereby issued with a warning in accordance with Standing Order 11(a xv).'

The formal warning should be minuted.

If the disruption continues after the Formal Warning is issued, the following statement should be read

‘Following the issue of a formal warning to you under Standing Order 11 (a xv) I hereby order your removal from the meeting room for the duration of the meeting.’

The statement should be minuted. which would include methods to identify the person/s.

If the person/s refuse to leave the meeting room, using only reasonable force, they can be physically ejected from the meeting room and due to having no security staff on site this would require assistance from Hampshire Constabulary. This aspect should be directly communicated to the person/s.

No member or officer should verbally or physically interject, as it is important to stay calm and not inflame the situation.

Should member / officer safety be of concern, the meeting should be adjourned, and all members / officers should vacate the meeting room by going into the main office. The security door should be immediately secured. Police arrival should be awaited.

Once the building has been vacated by the offending person/s, the meeting can reconvene if required. Despite the passage of time following the incident, it would be prudent for all members and officers to leave the building together or at least in pairs.