



## POLICY ON USE OF MOBILE PHONES IN COUNCIL MEETINGS

### 1. Summary and Policy Context

1.1 For the purposes of this report, the expression “Council meeting” means a meeting of the Council, Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Group and “mobile phone” includes other portable communications devices.

1.2 Council has agreed that some control on the use of mobile phones in meetings should be introduced but a light touch should be applied when drawing up rules, details of which are now included in the Council’s Standing Orders.

### 2. Relevant Background Information

2.1 The control of the use of mobile phones at Council meetings is necessary to avoid the disruption of meetings by audible alerts and by users replying to calls while in the meeting room. Advances in technology (in particular text messaging, web browsing and other non-audio-based communication facilities) mean that the rationale for a total ban on the use of mobile phones is not as strong as it once may have been. There is a growing tendency during meetings for individuals to use their mobile devices to check messages, browse the internet and even access agendas and supporting documentation. Much of this can be done discreetly and, as long as it does not interfere with the proceedings, it would be disproportionate to ban the use of mobile phones altogether.

2.2 Bearing in mind the above considerations, the use of mobile phones during meetings is permitted, subject to the following:

- (a) the device should be kept on silent or vibrate mode throughout the meeting;
- (b) there should be no use of the voice facility to make calls, receive calls or check messages. Only text or non-voice uses can be made of mobile phones;
- (c) the person presiding at the meeting may require all mobile phones to be switched off at any time.

2.3 There is a general requirement that use of mobile phones at meetings be discreet, proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances. There will be an expectation and understanding that this requirement would be supported/enforced voluntarily mainly through the political group system so far as it relates to Members and through the Officer leadership in so far as it applies to Officers. The chair of the meeting will also have a key role in ensuring that any use is kept within acceptable limits and will have the power to ban mobile phones for the duration of the meeting.

Approved and adopted by the Council on 21 March 2016 – Minute No. 15 314(2)  
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