

## **West Somerset Council**

### **Advice regarding protest action affecting our premises.**

#### **West Somerset Council does not oppose peaceful protests or demonstrations.**

West Somerset Council recognizes that people have a lawful right to express their views through peaceful demonstrations or protests..

However, we also have a duty to safeguard the general public, our staff, elected members and private and public property.

In order to assist peaceful protest or demonstrations we have prepared the following guidance which we would ask people to adhere to.

West Somerset Council has offices in Killick Way; Williton; TA4 4QA. We also have a customer centre in Summerland Road; Minehead. The premises in Williton have an area outside the main entrance which is free from vehicular traffic. Our premises in Minehead are immediately adjacent to a busy road and passing traffic could present a danger. Therefore we advise that any demonstrations are undertaken at our Williton offices.

Most of the Council's meetings are held in in the Council Chamber at the Williton offices and are open to the public. Further advice regarding specific meetings and how to make representations at meetings can be obtained from our website. Some meetings, or specific agenda items at meetings, require that the public and press are excluded because legislation prevents disclosure of exempt information. We ask that protestors respect this and leave the Chamber when requested to do so.

The public must be able to enter our premises at all times that we are open for business and be able to speak to our staff without hindrance and, if appropriate, in private. Therefore, we do not permit any form of protest action in the public reception area. Similarly, we do not allow photography or any form of audio or visual recording in or into this area. This includes public and media photography, filming or recording.

We also advise that, if demonstrators wish to have direct contact with a particular member of staff or Councillor, this should be arranged in advance. The member of staff or Councillor will have the option to meet a demonstrator in public or in private. The nature of our work is such that it is highly unlikely that a specific person will be available without prior notice.

The Council Chamber has limited capacity and in order to assist us to accommodate the public we would ask that if a protest is being planned you contact us in advance in order that, if appropriate, a larger public venue can be secured.

The council does not condone any protest, demonstration or action that hinders the general public or staff to conduct business, that is perceived to be antisocial behaviour or any action that results in harm to property or person. Appropriate action will be taken immediately in the event that any person or property is put at risk. The council reserves the right to ask people to leave its building(s) and land or take appropriate action to get people removed from its property if it is deemed necessary.

For further information concerning Council meetings, please visit our website at [www.westsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.westsomerset.gov.uk)