



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

The Chief Executive
Principal Councils in England

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

04 February 2014

Dear Chief Executive,

Recorded Votes at Budget Meetings

I am writing to draw your attention to both a letter that Brandon Lewis MP, the Minister for Local Government, has today sent to your Leader, and to The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. You will see from the Minister's letter that the Government's expectation is that all councils will adopt at their budget meetings this year the practice of recorded votes - that is recording in the minutes of the meeting how each member present voted - on any decision relating to the budget or council tax. I enclose a copy of the letter.

The Regulations are available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2014/165>. These Regulations make it mandatory for councils, as soon as is practicable after the Regulations are in force, to amend their Standing Orders so as to include provisions requiring recorded votes at budget meetings.

As the Minister explains in his letter, even where councils hold their budget meetings before the Regulations come into force, or before councils are able to amend their Standing Orders as a consequence of these Regulations, this does not prevent them from applying the practice of recorded votes to the budget decisions at that meeting.

Any queries on this letter should be addressed to Stuart Young at stuart.young@communities.gsi.gov.uk tel: 0303 44 42005.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Rowsell

Paul Rowsell

P Rowsell
Deputy Director, Democracy
Department for Communities and Local Government
3/J1 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel 03034442005
E-Mail: paul.rowsell@communities.gsi.gov.uk



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Brandon Lewis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

The Leader
Principal Councils in England

Tel: 0303 444 3430
Fax: 0303 444 3986
E-Mail: brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Leader

www.gov.uk/dclg

04 February 2014

Recorded Votes at Budget Meetings

In the coming weeks, your council will be holding its annual budget meeting at which it will be formally taking decisions about its expenditure on local services and council tax levels for the year ahead. These discussions will affect the lives and household budgets of all who live in the council's area. Local people should be able to see how those they have elected to represent them have voted on these critical decisions.

Accordingly I am writing to you today to say that the Government's expectation is that at this year's budget meetings, all councils will adopt the practice of recorded votes – that is recording in the minutes of the meeting how each member present voted – on any decision relating to the budget or council tax. People will thus be able to see how their councillors voted, not only on the substantive budget motions agreeing the budget, setting council taxes or issuing precepts, but also on any amendments proposed at the meeting.

We are very clear that any serious commitment to transparency and democratic accountability, which I am confident we all share, demands nothing less in today's circumstances. I know that the practice of recorded votes is already being followed in a range of circumstances across councils. If local people are to continue to have confidence in their councils and their elected representatives, then the practice of recorded votes needs to be followed everywhere on this year's budget decisions.

To facilitate this, we have last week made 'The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014'. These Regulations make it mandatory for councils as soon as is practicable after the Regulations are in force, to amend their Standing Orders so as to include provisions requiring recorded votes at budget meetings.

I recognise that some councils may be holding budget meetings before they have formally amended their Standing Orders, but nothing prevents the council from simply resolving to holding a recorded vote, in line with the Regulations.

BRANDON LEWIS MP