



Department for Communities and Local Government

The Leader
Principal Councils in England

Dear Leader

Brandon Lewis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

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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 councillor's 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