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P O L I C Y ON PUBLIC FILMING, RECORDING OR OTHERWISE REPORTING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014, that came into force in England on 6 August 2014 give rights to members of the press and public to use modern technology and communication methods such as filming, audio-recording, blogging and tweeting to report the proceedings of the meetings of their councils and other local government bodies. This 2014 amendment of the 1960 Act provides that a person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he is present at the meeting of a Parish Council, but otherwise may:

- (a) Film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting.
- (b) Use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later;
- (c) Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.

2. GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES

The government has published a Plain English Guide of practical information on how the public can exercise their new rights, and what they should expect from their local government bodies. These have been, produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Open and Accountable Local Government

The “Plain English Guide” gives practical information about what the new rules mean for members of the public attending meetings of local government bodies. This includes Parish and Town Councils.

Part 1 is the relevant section and focuses on the use of various communication tools for reporting the proceedings of any meeting of a local government body which is open to the public.

DCLG guidance suggests that Councils may wish to have a policy in place in respect of the filming, recording, photographing or other reporting of;

- (i) persons who object to the same and

(ii) children and vulnerable adults.

3. COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT

The Council acknowledges that it is required by legislation to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings.

The Council acknowledges that no prior permission is required but asks that any person wishing to film or audio record a public meeting let Council staff know in order that all necessary arrangements can be made for the public meeting.

The Council will provide “reasonable facilities” to facilitate reporting.

The Council will provide a space to view and hear the meetings, seats and a table. This will not be part of the seating arrangements for the Council itself or an area required by Council staff or invited guests.

It is not permitted to provide a running verbal commentary.

Those undertaking reporting must not act in a disruptive manner. This could be any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of meetings or impedes other members of the public being able to see, hear or film etc. the proceedings.

Examples are listed but are not inclusive:

- (i) Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chairman,
- (ii) Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate / discussion.
- (iii) Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography; and
- (iv) Asking for people to repeat statements for the purpose of recording.

Public will be excluded from a meeting, under the Council’s Standing Orders, if acting in a disruptive manner.

Recording equipment must be removed from the chamber if at any stage the meeting becomes a private meeting.

No trailing cables or plugging in to sockets of electrical equipment will be permitted.

Children and vulnerable adults are not to be filmed, recorded or photographed or otherwise reported about where the relevant responsible adult has not given consent. (which in the case of a vulnerable adult is a medical professional, their carer or legal guardian, and in the case of a child, their parent, legal guardian or teacher).

Part of the public area will be used, if required, for children and vulnerable adults or those public attending who do not wish to be filmed, however, this is within the limitation of the Council Meeting Room and its layout.

Persons taking part in the public participation section, excluding children and vulnerable adults as indicated above, may be filmed, recorded or photographed or otherwise reported whether they

are in a designated area or not.

Persons filming meetings etc. are likely to record personal data of individuals. These persons must take care to ensure that personal data is used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR)

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

The policy is intended to clarify the requirements of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 for the benefit of employees, Councillors, members of the public and members of the press.

The Chairman of the Council or Committee meetings will be responsible for its implementation and deal with any associated disruption which interferes with the flow or conduct of the meeting or impedes other members of the public being able to see, hear, film, audio record, take photographs or use social media such as tweeting and blogging.

The Chairman of the Council or Committee will remind those present at the meeting of this Policy. In particular reminding individuals who wish to film to avoid those who have expressed a wish not to be filmed or children or vulnerable adults without the express permission of the parent or responsible person.

5. ENFORCEMENT OF THE POLICY

Enforcement of the policy will be undertaken by the Chairman of the Council meeting as appropriate.

Behaviour deemed to be disruptive will be dealt with under Council Standing Order No. 4 (Disorderly Conduct at Meetings).

To be reviewed annually in September