



WSPC Recording & Reporting on Council Meetings Policy 2024

Adopted 22 May 2023 Reviewed 20th May 2024

Recording and Reporting on Council Meetings Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy applies to Full Council Meetings and meetings of any Committee of the Parish Council.
- 1.2. West Swindon Parish Council supports the principles of openness and transparency and encourages public interest and engagement in decision making.
- 1.3. This sets out the criteria for the recording or reporting of Council Meetings.

2. Audio and Visual Recording – Your Obligations

- 2.1 Any member of the public or of the media wishing to photograph and/or audio or visually record a meeting must agree to the following:
 - a) Any photography or audio/visual recording must take place from a fixed position in the meeting room approved by the Chair so as to minimise disruption to the proceedings;
 - b) The use of flash photography or additional lighting will only be permitted for a limited period during the meeting at a point in the proceedings agreed in advance with the Chair, so as to minimise disruption to the proceedings;
 - c) If the Chair feels that any photography, audio or visual recording is disrupting the meeting in any way then the operator of the equipment will be required to stop;
 - d) If during the meeting a motion is passed to exclude the press and public, because confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, then all rights to record the meeting are removed and the operator of the equipment will be required to stop recording and /or photography;
 - e) If the Chair adjourns the meeting, then the operator of the equipment should stop any recording or photography at the point at which the meeting is adjourned;
 - f) Those making audio or visual recordings must comply with any request made by the Chair regarding respecting the public's right to privacy;
 - g) People seated in the public seating area should not be photographed, filmed or recorded without the consent of the individuals concerned. This also applies to

those individuals who may ask a public question, present a petition or make a representation at a Council meeting open to the public and who are seated in a “public seating area”;

- h) Use must not be made of an image or recording if consent is refused by an individual;
- i) Photographs, audio, and visual recordings should not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing the views being recorded in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect.

2.2 It should be noted that failure to comply with this Protocol may lead to the refusal of any future requests to photograph or audio or visually record any future Council meetings in view of the risk of future disruption to proceedings.

2.3 If a request has been received to take photographs or to audio or visually record a particular meeting, notices to this effect may be displayed in the relevant meeting room. To assist the public, the Chair will make an announcement that the meeting will be photographed and/or recorded or filmed. The Council may, on occasion, audio record meetings for minuting purposes only. The Chair will make an announcement to this effect and these recordings will not be made available to anyone outside the Council.

3. Audio and Visual Recording – Your Rights

3.1 If as a member of the public you do not wish to be photographed, filmed or recorded please inform the Clerk or Chair before the start of the meeting.

4. Procedure Prior to the Meeting for Recording or Photographing a Meeting

4.1 Requests to take photographs or undertake audio or visual recordings of meetings open to the public, either by members of the public or by the media should wherever possible be made to the Clerk at least two working days before the meeting.

4.2 The request should include the following information as this will assist the Council in making preparations for the meeting to avoid any disruption to the proceedings:

- a) to which meeting this request refers;
- b) the name, organisation (if applicable) and contact details of the person making the request;

- c) what equipment it is intended will be used (e.g. camera/audio recorder/video camera);
- d) what the photographs, or audio/visual recording will be used for and/or where the information is to be published.

5. Procedure at the Meeting

- 5.1 Equipment must be set up before the meeting starts. The use of flash photography of additional lighting will only be permitted for a limited period during the meeting at a point in the proceedings agreed in advance with the Chair. This will be communicated to all relevant parties. This is to minimise disruption to the proceedings. If the Chair feels the photography/audio/visual recording is disrupting the proceedings the operator of the equipment will be required to stop. If use continues the Chair will ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave then the Chair may adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption.
- 5.2 Anyone asked to leave a meeting because they have refused to comply with the Chair's requests may be refused permission to photograph, record or film at future Parish Council meetings that are open to the public so as to minimise the risk of future disruption to the proceedings.

6. Social Media

- 6.1 There are no restrictions placed on anyone at the meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar "social media" provided that the Chair does not consider their actions are disrupting the proceedings of the meeting. Any person can provide a written commentary during a meeting, as well as an oral commentary outside or after the meeting. If the Chair feels the use of social media is at the time disrupting the proceedings the Councillor, member of the public or media representative may be required to stop. If use continues, the Chair will ask the person to leave the meeting. If the person refuses to leave then the Chair may adjourn the meeting or make other appropriate arrangements for the meeting to continue without disruption. Councillors and members of the public are reminded that the law of the land applies to social media use – including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences.
- 6.2 The Council allows the filming or recording of meetings only in accordance with its legal obligations and takes no responsibility for, nor accepts any liability for filming or recording material made by persons or its subsequent use or publication.