

PITSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Policy on the Reporting of Meetings

1. Introduction

As part of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/2095), an amendment was made to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the right for members of the public to report on meetings of parish and town councils.

This act gives the right for any member of the public to:

- Film, photograph or make an audio recording of proceedings at a meeting. Intrusive lighting, use of flash photography and asking people to repeat statements for the purpose of the record is not permitted.
- Report or provide commentary on proceedings at a meeting in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or orally outside or after the meeting (this includes Tweeting or blogging). This does not require the relevant local government body to permit oral reporting or oral commentary on a meeting as it takes place if the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting as this would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.
- Using any other means to enable persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later.

This policy details the acceptable use for public meetings to be filmed, audio-recorded, photographed and the permitted use of social media.

2. Procedure

- Officers, councillors, guests, and members of the public may be filmed, audio-recorded or photographed during a meeting which is open to the public.
- Filming, audio recording or photographing may only take place from the public gallery seating area allocated at each meeting. Flashes must be switched off before the start of the meeting and intrusive lighting is prohibited.
- The Parish Council will provide 'reasonable facilities' for photographs, filming and audio-recording to enable the public to report on all public meetings. This will include space to view and hear the meeting plus seating.
- Out of courtesy, any persons wishing to film, or audio record a public meeting must advise the Clerk before the meeting commences of their intent to do so, submitting their name and contact details which will be held by the Clerk.
- The Chair will announce at the start of each meeting, any notice which has been provided of the intent to film or audio-record the meeting including the person's name who will be performing this recording. Any member of the public who actively objects to being filmed must inform the Chair following this announcement, so that the recorder can ensure that this request is adhered to, so long as it does not undermine the transparency of the meeting.
- Any vulnerable members of the public that wish to be excluded from being recorded must be able to move to a designated area of the public gallery which permits this.
- All persons present have the right to view the footage recorded at the meeting, which must be supplied to the Clerk following the meeting.
- Meetings where the press and public are excluded, may not be filmed and all recording equipment and devices must be removed and switched off before closed sessions begin, to ensure that confidentiality is not breached. This includes council and councillor equipment.

The council must satisfy themselves that this has been adhered to before the closed part of the meeting commences.

- The use of social media such as blogging, Facebook and Twitter are also permitted by the public during this meeting, so long as it does not disrupt the proceedings of the meeting. All devices must be switched onto silent during the meeting to prevent any disruption.
- Councillors or officers wishing to film or use social media during a meeting must retire to the public gallery area designated for this purpose.
- Under the Council Standing Orders, any disruptive behaviour may result in you being asked to be excluded from the meeting. In relation to this policy, examples of disruptive behaviour include (but are not limited to):
 - asking people to repeat statements for the purpose of the recording,
 - flash photography,
 - excessive noise in recording or setting up equipment,
 - oral commentary,
 - or filming from any other area than the designated public seating area.
- Any person who attends a meeting of a relevant local government body for the purpose of reporting on the meeting may use any communication method, including the internet, to publish, post or otherwise share the results of the person's reporting activities. Publication and dissemination may take place at the time of the meeting or occur after the meeting.
- The Parish Council may also decide to make their own audio recording of the same meeting.

3. Review

This policy was adopted by Pitstone Parish Council on29/2/24.....

minute reference ...303/23..... and will be reviewed on at least an annual basis.

Signed on behalf of Pitstone Parish Council by:

D Nicholls

Chairman