



# HOVETON PARISH COUNCIL

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## Protocol for the Reporting of Parish Council Meetings

### INTRODUCTION

As per Hoveton Parish Council's Standing Orders, a person who attends a meeting of the Parish Council (or its committees or sub-committees) is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means:

- to film, photograph, or make an audio recording of a meeting;
- to use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later;
- to report or comment on the proceedings of a meeting in writing during or after the meeting;
- to orally report or comment on the proceedings of a meeting after the meeting has ended (a person may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place).

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance, particularly for members of the press or the public, on the reporting of meetings of the Parish Council.

### 1. RECORDING OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

- 1.1. In line with national legislation, the filming, photographing, and audio recording of public Parish Council and committee meetings is permitted. Reporting is restricted by legislation to the proceedings of the meeting (in other words, from calling to order to the official closure of the meeting).
- 1.2. Any person intending to film, photograph, or audio record a meeting should inform the Parish Clerk at least 24 hours in advance of the commencement of the meeting to ensure the necessary arrangements can be made. This will include arrangements to inform the relevant Parish Council members, guest speakers and public present and, where possible, to provide a separate area for any members of the public who do not wish to be included in the film, photographs or other recordings being made.
- 1.3. Where notice has been received that a meeting of the Parish Council will be filmed, photographed or recorded, the Chairman will announce at the start of the meeting that the proceedings will be filmed, photographed or recorded, and the Chairman will invite any members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed to move to the designated area.
- 1.4. In line with national legislation, this policy does not permit the filming, photographing or audio recording of persons under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults without the permission of a responsible adult.

- 1.5. Any person filming, photographing or audio recording public meetings is required to give due consideration at all times to ensure that there is no disruption to normal proceedings. In this regard, the use of flash photography, additional lighting, or other equipment that may interfere with normal proceedings will not be allowed unless agreement has been reached in advance of the meeting.
- 1.6. Any filming or recording of meetings should be conducted overtly from a fixed point in an area of the meeting room specified by the Chairman. All reporting equipment must be set up before the meeting begins to avoid disrupting the meeting.
- 1.7. The use of social media for the reporting of proceedings is permitted. Any persons wishing to use social media will be required to ensure that this causes no disruption to the running of the meeting. All devices will need to remain on silent for the duration of the meeting.
- 1.8. The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

## **2. TERMINATION OR SUSPENSION OF REPORTING OF MEETINGS**

- 2.1. 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 report the meeting cease and the operator of the equipment must stop reporting and leave the meeting room, taking all reporting equipment with them.
- 2.2. If the Chairman considers that any filming, photographing, audio recording, or social media reporting activity is causing a disruption to the meeting, the person causing the disruption will be requested to take the appropriate action. Should the disruption continue, the operator of the equipment will be required to stop reporting.
- 2.3. The termination or suspension of filming, photographing, audio recording, or social media reporting will also occur when:
  - there is any public disturbance of the meeting;
  - people are asked to repeat statements for the purposes of recording;
  - requests are received from members of the public to cease recording when they speak;
  - the Chairman considers that a defamatory statement has been made;
  - it is considered that continued recording/filming/photographing could infringe the rights of any individual (e.g. an individual has made a specific request to the Chairman of the meeting that they don't wish to be filmed, photographed or audio recorded).

## **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1. Hoveton Parish Council welcomes responsible, balanced reporting of its meetings in order to promote greater transparency and awareness of its decision-making.
- 3.2. Those reporting on meetings of the Council should not edit the recordings, films or photographs in such a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may

ridicule, or show a lack of respect towards, anybody being photographed, filmed, or recorded.

- 3.3. The formal legal record of a meeting of the Council will be the approved minutes of that meeting taken by the Parish Clerk and approved by a vote of Council members. Minutes of Council meetings are published on the Council's website.
- 3.4. The recording and reporting of the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those recording and reporting to ensure their compliance with all applicable laws and guidelines, including data protection and defamation. Anybody recording/reporting a meeting will be responsible for any allegations of breaches of the law which may result from their use of recorded material, and such persons are admitted to meetings on the basis that they accept this responsibility. Hoveton Parish Council reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings in appropriate circumstances.
- 3.5. Hoveton Parish Council takes no responsibility for any recordings made by others or for the subsequent use of any such recordings by any third party. Anybody making or editing a recording of a meeting of the Council shall in doing so be taken to have indemnified the Council against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands, liabilities, losses and expenses whatsoever relating to the making or use of that recording.

**Adopted by Hoveton Parish Council on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019**