

# ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

In the District of St. Albans, County of Hertfordshire



## PROTOCOL ON RECORDING, FILMING, PHOTOGRAPHING OF PUBLIC COUNCIL MEETINGS

This policy was adopted by the Council on 16 October 2014, item 7.13.

This protocol sets out guidance for members of the press and public who wish to film, record, photograph or use social media to report on the proceedings of all Council meetings that are open to the public.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Whilst no prior permission is required to carry out this activity the Council encourages any person wishing to do so to advise the Clerk in advance so that necessary arrangements can be made at the public meeting.
- 1.2 A specific area will be designated within the meeting room with clear signage and marked chairs for the purpose of recording, filming or photographing. Those wishing to carry out these activities are required to remain in this area to avoid disruption at the meeting. (In the Council chamber this area will be the marked seats at the rear of the room on the right hand side.)
- 1.3 The Council requests that persons seated in the public gallery area (seating at the rear of the meeting room or as marked) are not included in any film or photograph. Please respect the wishes of the public who do not wish to be filmed or photographed.
- 1.4 Where a public meeting is held on site please contact the Clerk to allow appropriate arrangements to be made to avoid disruption or interference.
- 1.5 The Council requests that any recording, filming or otherwise is undertaken in an open and overt manner so that it is clearly visible to anyone attending the meeting.
- 1.6 The public or press undertaking these activities must not act in a disruptive manner.

### **2. Reporting and commentary**

- 2.1 Reports of a meeting may be via any social media.
- 2.2 A person can provide written commentary during a meeting, as well as oral commentary outside or after a meeting. However, oral commentary is not permitted during a meeting as it would be disruptive to the good order of the meeting.
- 2.3 The majority of the Council's meetings are open to the public. However, where it is agreed to formally exclude the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed the meeting cannot be recorded. You are not permitted to leave recording equipment in a room where a private meeting is being held.
- 2.4 The use of social media should be carried out in a non-disruptive manner and only to the extent that it does not interfere with that persons ability or that of others to follow the debate or discussion.

### **3. Disruption**

3.1 If anyone undertaking these activities acts in a disruptive manner it could result in being excluded from the meeting.

Examples can include:

- o Moving outside the designated area without the consent of the Chairman
- o Excessive noise in recording, setting up or placing equipment during debate or discussion
- o Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
- o Interruption of the meeting or asking people to repeat statements for the recording.

### **4. Are there any limits on recording or what people say?**

4.1 Please respect the wishes of the public who do not wish to be filmed or photographed. Written consent is required from the parent/guardian of children under 18 and vulnerable adults for their protection.

4.2 The 'law of the land' applies, including the law of defamation and the law on public order offences\*.

4.3 Freedom of speech within the law should also be exercised with personal and social responsibility, showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others.

4.4 The Council asks that those recording proceedings do not edit a recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being filmed or recorded.

4.5 Any person choosing to film, record, photograph or broadcast any public meeting is responsible for any claims or liability arising from their actions.

### **5. General**

5.1 The Council will display requirements as to filming, recording and broadcasting in its meeting rooms or venues and those undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted them whether they have read them or not.

5.2 The Chair of the meeting has the absolute authority to stop or suspend the meeting and take appropriate action if any person contravenes these principles or is deemed to be using a device in a disruptive manner.

5.3 The Council encourages anyone wishing to film, record, photograph or broadcast meetings to read the guide to Open and Accountable Local Government published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

\* Data Protection Act 1998

Crown Prosecution Service guidance on social media

You may contact St Stephen Parish Council by writing to the Parish Clerk at:  
The Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts, AL2 3PJ  
Or by email: [Clerk@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Clerk@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk)