

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

OPEN & ACCOUNTABLE – MEETINGS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL POLICY



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INDEX

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. When the Policy Applies.....	2
3. Principles of the Policy	2
4. Procedure	2
5. The Council.....	3
6. Members of the Press and Public may: -	3
7. Other use of Media Tools	4
8. Members and Officers to the Council.....	5
9. At the Meeting	5

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide Members with information on the future management of all public Council Meetings, e.g., Council, Committees and Sub-Committees.

2. When the Policy Applies

- 2.1. This Policy applies to all Parish Council Members, Co-opted Members, Non-Voting Members and Members of the Press and Public (DCLG – Open and Accountable Local Government 2014).

3. Principles of the Policy

- 3.1 The Parish Council wishes to regulate the use of photographs, filming or auto recording of its Meetings in order to ensure that such meetings are not disruptive to the good order of such meetings.
- 3.2 The use of media tools is recognized as contributing towards transparency and democratic debate and there will be a general presumption in favour of their use by the Council.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 The Chairman of any such meetings will at the commencement of the meeting inform all those present that the proceedings of the Council meetings will be live streamed. All meetings (unless confidential or entered confidential session) will be live streamed via YouTube on the Parish Council's YouTube Channel (Southwater Parish Council).
- 4.2 Should either the press or public wish to use media tools, this will generally be permitted subject to a request being submitted to the Executive Officer no later than 4:00pm, two working days prior to the meeting (for example, the deadline for Full Council on a Wednesday would be 4:00pm, on the preceding Monday).
- 4.3 Such requests should include: -
 - The name of the organization and contact details of the person making the request;
 - What equipment will be used;
 - What the audio recording will be used for;
 - When the person wishes to film or record during the meeting.
- 4.4 It should be noted that not all meetings will be suitable for filming or audio recording, e.g., HR Sub-Committees where these deal with specific employee details.

5. The Council

- 5.1 Will live stream all its meetings open to the public (excluding those which are exempt or confidential by nature of the business to be discussed).
- 5.2 It will be deemed that a member of the press and public have deemed their consent to the recording of the meeting at which they may be present.
- 5.3 The draft meeting minutes for all public Council meetings will be uploaded to the Council's website to be ratified at the next Council meeting. (www.southwater-pc.gov.uk).

6. Members of the Press and Public may: -

- 6.1 Deem that all those present acknowledge that the meetings may be filmed and recorded.
- 6.2 Give the relevant notice to the Executive Officer or Chairman of the Meeting that they wish to photograph, tape or auto-record the proceedings of the meeting.
- 6.3 On receipt of a request to film or audio record a meeting, the Executive Officer to the Council will liaise with the Chairman of the meeting, or in their absence the Vice-Chairman, before determining whether the request accords with the general principle set out above.
- 6.4 Any filming/recording must take place from fixed positions in the meeting room (see plan attached) and agreed with the Chairman of the meeting, in liaison with the Executive Officer to the Council or the senior officer present.
- 6.5 Equipment must be set up before the meeting starts and removed in the event of the press and public being excluded due to the matter being of a confidential or of an exempt nature.
- 6.6 The use of flash photograph or additional lighting will only be permitted for a limited period during the meeting at a point in the proceedings agreed with the Chairman in liaison with the Executive Officer to the Council or senior officer. This will be communicated to the relevant parties.
- 6.7 If the Chairman considers that the filming or audio recording is disrupting the meeting in any way, the operator will be required to stop immediately.
- 6.8 Any filming or audio recording must not be edited in such a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing the views being expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those present at the meeting.

- 6.9 Media organizations will be required to supply the Council with a copy of all film or audio recordings made at a meeting within a reasonable period (this being two weeks).
- 6.10 The requirements and obligations contained within, and arising from this Policy will be provided to the member of the public or media organization when permission to fil/record has been granted, and will state that permission is only granted on the understanding that they will be adhered to.
- 6.11 The Executive Officer will ensure that proper facilities are offered to ensure that the meeting is conducted in good order (this will include a table, chairs and water in a location pre-determined by the Council).
- 6.12 If the press or public wish to email or blog from the meeting they should ensure that prior to the meeting they have the Wi-Fi information required to connect to the internet.
- 6.13 Written commentary is permitted.
- 6.14 Members of the public and others present are reminded that the law of defamation and public order offences apply to all social media communications and reports.
- 6.15 Members of the public and others present must indicate to the Executive Officer and/or Chairman prior to the meeting commencing that they wish to speak on a given matter. The Chairman will then suspend Standing Orders if the need arises to enable the public's views to be expressed.
- 6.16 Members of the public during "public participation" will be allowed a total period of 3 minutes each to put forward their views and concerns, the public participation being limited to seven members of the public, a total of 15 minutes public participation, this being subject to the discretion of the Chairman of the Meeting
- 6.17 Members of the Council can at this point ask the Executive Officer to investigate matters of concern for future debate or consideration. Members of Council should discuss any concerns with the Executive Officer prior to the meeting as per Standing Orders giving the appropriate notice for a response.

7. Other use of Media Tools

- 7.1 No restrictions will be placed on anyone in the public gallery at a meeting in relation to the use of twitter, blogs, Facebook and still photography, providing that the Chairman does not consider their actions are disrupting the proceedings of the meeting.
- 7.2 They should note that: -

- Oral commentary during the course of a meeting is NOT allowed at any point.
- All equipment (including phones, cameras and recording devices) should be removed from the Chamber during any session which is exempt or confidential as from which the press and public have been excluded.

8. Members and Officers to the Council

- 8.1 Members as participants are in a different position to members of the public and their actions affect the reputation of the Council. Members have an obligation to pay close attention to the proceedings of the meetings they attend and demonstrate that they are playing an active part. Therefore, Members should not as a general rule engage in the use of social media during meetings of the Council, Committees or Sub-Committees.
- 8.2 The use of media tools by officers is only permitted if it is in the normal course of their work.
- 8.3 The use of social media tools is not permitted when a meeting is in exempt session.

9. At the Meeting

- 9.1 At the start of the meeting the Chairman will advise all persons present if filming or recording has been allowed and will request that all mobile phones are set to silent to ensure that the meeting is not disrupted.
- 9.2 Visitors to a meeting, including persons registered to speak at the meeting, other interested parties, Parish Council representatives and representatives and officers of outside agencies who have been specifically invited to address the meeting may, at this point, elect not to be filmed, recorded or photographed.
- 9.3 There is a presumption that the Council's own participants in a meeting, being either servicing Councillors or officers employed by the Council, consent to being filmed, recorded or photographed at those meetings where such activities have been permitted by the Chairman.
- 9.4 If the Chairman has not agreed that filming, recording or photographing can take place during a particular meeting, then a notice will be displayed to this effect.
- 9.5 The operator(s) of the filming, recording or photographic equipment must comply with the wishes of the persons detailed above. Where there is a failure to do so, the Chairman may decide to stop the proceedings and seek the removal of such equipment from the meeting room.

**UNDERTAKING BY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MEDIA/MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC
IN RELATION TO THE FILMING AND AUDIO RECORDING OF A MEETING**

I confirm that in attending the Meeting of the _____

to be held on _____ I will comply with the terms of the Council’s protocol on the use of media tools at meetings held in public.

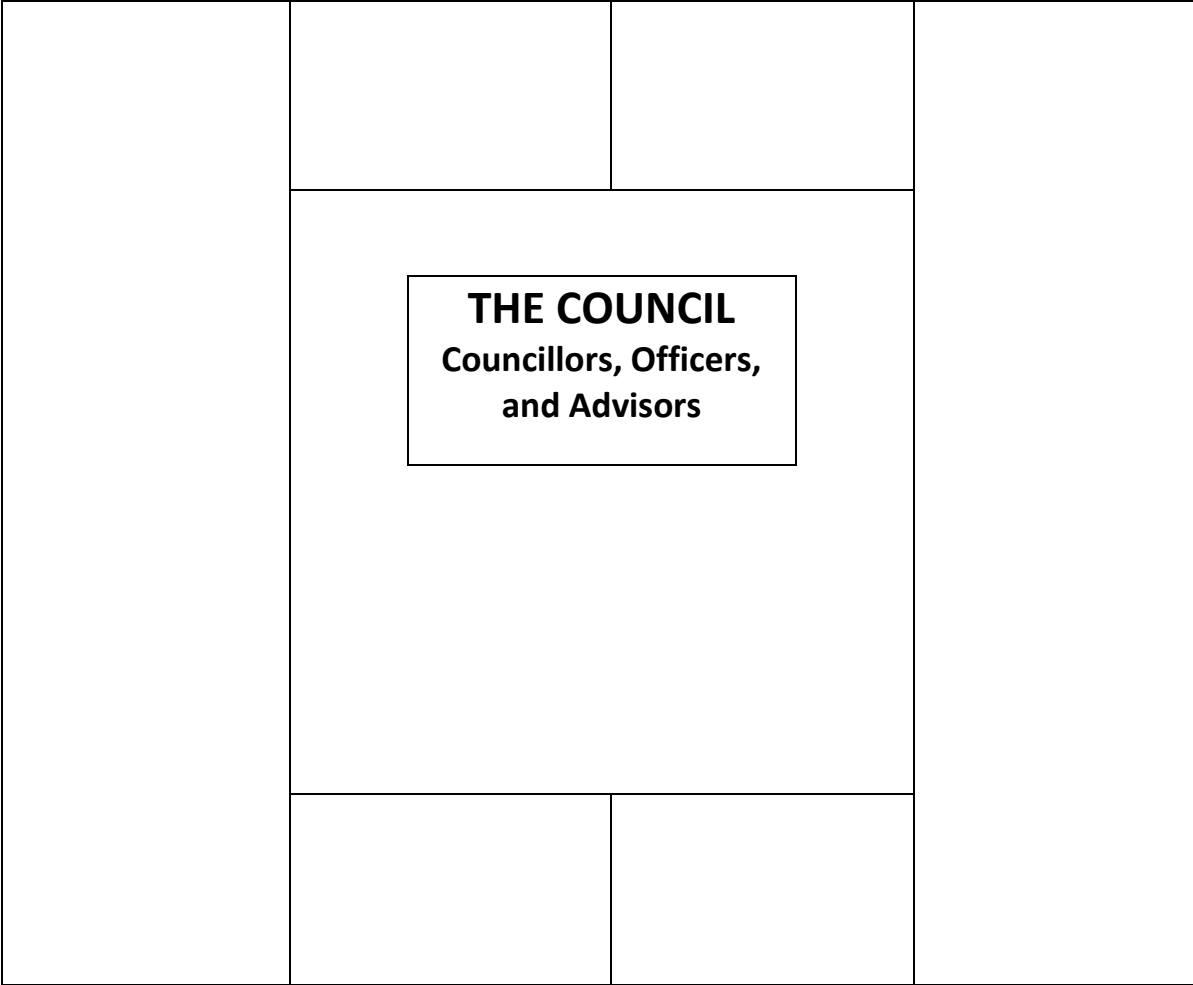
I confirm that I will direct anyone who is acting under my authority, who is also attending that Meeting, to comply with this protocol I undertake that any visual and/or sound recordings made shall not be published in a manner, (where in whole or by way of an extract), that is designed to mislead the public as to the true essence of any statements (verbally made or otherwise) that were recorded and in that regard, any extract published, will be of sufficient duration so as to avoid any misleading impression made.

I shall ensure that anyone acting under my authority shall comply with this requirement and that if the recordings are passed to a third party that that third party shall also comply with this requirement.

Signed:

Full name:

Dated:



PRESS AND PUBLIC
FILMING & RECORDING

SPEAKERS
FILMING & RECORDING

PUBLIC GALLERY
Recording & Filming Allowed

CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS
FILMING STRICTLY PROHIBITED