



POLICY ON FILMING, RECORDING & REPORTING ON COUNCIL MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

Chesham Town Council is committed to conducting its meetings in an open and transparent manner. Members of the public are welcome to film, audio-record, take photographs and use social media to report the proceedings of the Town Council's meetings. This document explains the Council's policy on filming, recording and reporting to facilitate the openness and transparency of Council meetings, whilst ensuring that the meetings are not disrupted and that members of the public are protected.

NOTICE OF INTENT

Whilst no prior permission is required to film, photograph or audio-record Town Council meetings, we request that members of the public make attending officers aware of their intentions before the meeting commences. This will enable the officers to ensure that adequate facilities are in place and that any members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed are protected.

FACILITIES

Town Council meetings take place in the Council Chamber, which has allocated seats and a desk from which the public can view and hear the meeting. The Chamber is fully disabled accessible and has a microphone system that can be used with an induction loop.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Members of the public are permitted to film, audio-record, photograph and use social media (such as tweeting and blogging) to report on meetings from the dedicated public seating areas in the Council Chamber.

Recording equipment can be left in a Council meeting and recording can take place without the member of the public being present. However, it will be necessary for recording to be halted and equipment removed if the meeting becomes a private meeting at any point. We request that members of the public make attending officers aware of their intentions before the meeting starts, so that officers can decide upon the best course of action. Officers have the right to turn off or remove any unattended equipment during the times when the public and press have been excluded. Any equipment left unattended in the Council Chamber is done so entirely at the owner's risk.

Councillors are permitted to use social media to report on meetings, providing that it is not disruptive, does not detract from the proper conduct of meetings and is done in accordance with the Town Council's Social Media Policy.

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

If a person has informed the Council officers in attendance of their wish to film, record or photograph the meeting prior to its commencement, the Chairman will announce at the start of the meeting that it is being recorded, so that everyone present is made aware.

If a person wishes to film, record or photograph a meeting and there are other members of the public in attendance, Council officers will request that they do so from the front row of the public seating.

If children or vulnerable adults are present at the Council meeting, they will be directed to sit in the row behind the person/people filming, recording or photographing so that they are not recorded, but are still fully able to observe and hear the proceedings.

If other members of the public are present at the meeting, Council officers will advise them to sit in the second row if they have any objections to being filmed, photographed or recorded.

WHAT CAN'T BE DONE

(i) Causing Disruption

Members of the public must not act in a disruptive manner. This includes, but is not restricted to, the following:

- moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public
- excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the meeting
- intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
- asking people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording
- providing an oral commentary during the meeting

Members of the public who are disruptive to the good order of Council meetings can be excluded from the meetings if they do not desist.

(ii) Recording Private Meetings

Members of the public are not allowed to film, audio-record, photograph or use social media to record private meetings. The chairman of the meeting will make a clear announcement when the public and press are to be excluded from a meeting. Officers will be responsible for checking that the room is cleared of any equipment before

confidential matters are discussed. Councillors are requested not to use social media to report on private meetings to ensure that confidentiality is not breached.

ONLINE COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council and committee meetings can be held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. Meetings are conducted on Microsoft Teams and are recorded via Teams. The Officer hosting the meeting is responsible for recording the meeting and will verbally advise all participants at the time the recording is begun. A written notice is also visible to all participants advising them that the meeting is being recorded and providing a link to Microsoft's Privacy Policy. Only authorised users set by the Council can view the videos post-recording. The videos will be deleted by the officer hosting the meeting once the minutes have been accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a four-year cycle.

Version 1 Adopted: 30 March 2015

Version 1 Re-adopted: 20 June 2016

Version 2 Adopted: 21 September 2020