

# ESSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

## OPENNESS, TRANSPARENCY AND RECORDING OF MEETINGS POLICY

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Essington Parish Council is committed to conducting its business in an open and transparent manner and to supporting public understanding of how decisions are made.

1.2 This policy sets out the Council's approach to the filming, photographing, audio recording and reporting of Parish Council meetings, in accordance with legislation and nationally recognised best practice.

### 2. Legislative Framework

2.1 This policy is informed by, and operates within, the following legislation:

- The **Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014**
- The **Localism Act 2011**
- The **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**
- The **Freedom of Information Act 2000**
- The **Data Protection Act 2018** and UK GDPR
- The **Law of Defamation**
- The **Public Order Act 1986**
- The **Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014**

2.2 These regulations give the public and press the right to attend and to report on meetings of the Parish Council that are open to the public.

### 3. What is Meant by "Reporting"

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, reporting includes:

- Filming, photographing, and audio recording of meetings
- Live streaming or recording meetings for later viewing or listening
- Written or electronic reporting, including blogging, tweeting and posting on social media platforms

### 4. Right to Film, Record and Report

4.1 Any member of the public or press may film, photograph, audio-record or otherwise report on the proceedings of meetings of the Parish Council or its committees that are open to the public.

4.2 No prior permission is required to carry out such recording or reporting.

4.3 Those intending to record a meeting are **requested**, as a courtesy, to inform the Clerk or the Chair before the meeting begins so that practical arrangements can be made and attendees made aware.

## 5. Conduct During Meetings

5.1 Recording and reporting must be carried out in a **non-disruptive manner**.

5.2 **Oral commentary (running verbal commentary)** during the course of a meeting is not permitted, as this would disrupt proceedings. Oral commentary may take place after the meeting.

5.3 Those recording must not:

- Interrupt the meeting
- Ask for statements to be repeated for recording purposes
- Move around the room without the Chair's approval
- Use intrusive lighting or flash photography

5.4 The Chair of the meeting has full discretion to manage the meeting and to take reasonable steps to prevent disruption.

## 6. Social Media Use

6.1 The use of social media (including live tweeting or blogging) is permitted during meetings provided it does not disrupt proceedings.

6.2 Councillors may use social media at meetings provided that:

- It does not distract from their role in the meeting
- It does not breach the Council's Code of Conduct

## 7. Facilities

7.1 The Parish Council will make reasonable arrangements, where practical, to facilitate recording and reporting. This may include:

- Designated seating areas
- Adequate space to view and hear the proceedings

7.2 The Council is not responsible for providing technical equipment or power supplies.

## 8. Protection of Privacy, Children and Vulnerable Adults

8.1 Recording and reporting must focus on the **proceedings of the meeting** and those actively participating.

8.2 Individuals seated in the public gallery who are not participating in the meeting should not be filmed, photographed or recorded without their consent.

8.3 The Council will seek to safeguard:

- Children
- Young people
- Vulnerable adults

8.4 Any recording that may identify a child or vulnerable adult requires the **express consent** of:

- A parent or legal guardian (for a child), or
- A carer or responsible professional (for a vulnerable adult)

## 9. Data Protection and Liability

9.1 Responsibility for compliance with data protection, defamation and other relevant legislation rests with the individual or organisation undertaking the recording or reporting.

9.2 The Parish Council accepts no liability for:

- The content of recordings made by third parties
- The use, editing or publication of such material
- Any loss or damage to personal equipment brought into meetings

9.3 Recordings should not be edited or presented in a manner that could misrepresent the proceedings.

## 10. Confidential and Excluded Business

10.1 Recording, filming or reporting is **not permitted** during any part of a meeting from which the public has been lawfully excluded.

10.2 Members of the public must cease recording when the meeting moves into confidential or "in committee" session.

## 11. Disruptive Behaviour

11.1 Disruptive behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- Excessive noise from equipment
- Repositioning equipment during debate
- Obstructing access or views
- Repeated failure to follow the Chair's instructions

11.2 The Chair may require any person causing disruption to cease recording or to leave the meeting.

11.3 Recording equipment must not be left unattended if the operator is excluded.

## 12. Meeting Announcement

12.1 At the start of each meeting, the Chair will remind those present that:

- The meeting may be recorded or reported
- Recording must be conducted respectfully and lawfully
- Confidential business must not be recorded

## 13. Review and Adoption

13.1 This policy was **adopted** by Essington Parish Council on: **23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2026**

13.2 The policy will be **reviewed periodically** to ensure it remains compliant with legislation and best practice.