

HOLT PARISH COUNCIL

PROTOCOL ON RECORDING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The right to record, film and to broadcast meetings of the parish meeting is established under the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014. This is in addition to the rights of the press and public to attend such meetings. For the purpose of this policy the term “record” means any form of audio, visual or electronic recording.

Policy Statement

1. Holt Parish Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it carries out its business whenever possible. It will therefore seek to provide reasonable facilities to allow anyone who wishes to do so to record meetings of the Council and its committees that are open to the public. Anyone can therefore film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media to report the meeting when it is open to the public.
2. The Council does however require that anyone filming, audio-recording, taking photographs, or using social media will do so in a way that does not disrupt the meeting and does not involve filming those members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed. The use of flash photography is not permitted.
3. As oral reporting or commentary on a meeting as it takes place by anyone who is present at the meeting would be disruptive the Council does not allow this. Anyone can however provide an oral report or commentary outside or after the meeting.
4. The Council does not permit anyone to report on a meeting using methods which can be used without that person being present at the meeting i.e. unmanned recording equipment, as there may be occasions when the recording needs to be suspended.

Protocol

1. The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance, particularly, for members of the press and the public on the filming, taking of photographs and the audio recording of any Council meeting which is held in public.
2. The protocol also refers to the use of “social media” at meetings and makes clear that there are no restrictions placed on anyone at the meeting using Twitter, blogs, Facebook or similar “social media” provided that the Chairman does not consider their actions are disrupting the meeting.
3. Ideally, anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting should notify the Parish Clerk of their intention not later than 24 hours before the meeting. The Clerk's details are set out on the website and the agenda of the meeting. Discussing the requirements with the Clerk beforehand will help to ensure the council provides reasonable facilities to meet the needs of the person that is recording.
4. The Clerk will then advise the person what facilities the Council can make available for them to use. This will usually mean that they are provided with space to view and hear the meeting, a seat, and possibly a desk, although the latter cannot be guaranteed due to the size of the Council Meeting Room.

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5. Irrespective of whether the Parish Clerk has been notified, anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting should on arrival at the meeting inform the Clerk who is present at the meeting.
6. Where the press and public are excluded from a meeting or part of a meeting owing to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, recording of that meeting or that part of the meeting will not be permitted.
7. The council requests that all recording is 'overt' (ie. Clearly visible to anyone at the meeting).
8. A person or persons making a recording has no right to interrupt a parish meeting by asking questions or making comments for the purpose of the recording. The person recording has no right to ask councillors, officers or any members of the public who have been given permission to contribute orally to the meeting to repeat a statement for the purposes of the recording.
9. If a request has been received to take photographs or to audio or visually record a particular meeting, notices to this effect will be prominently displayed inside and outside of the Council Meeting Room advising members of the public that other members of the public and the press may be recording the meeting and if they do not wish to be filmed or be photographed, they should inform the Clerk before the meeting begins. Failure to register an objection before the meeting begins will be taken to indicate their consent to being filmed or photographed. The Clerk will advise those wanting to film, or take photographs of any objections received and the council will make suitable arrangements to ensure that children, the vulnerable and other members of the public who object to being filmed, are protected without undermining the broader transparency of the meeting.
10. In the event that prior notification has not been given to the clerk, the Chairman will advise all those present at the start of the meeting that photographs, audio or visual recordings are taking place. The Clerk will advise those wanting to film or take photographs of any objections and the council will make suitable arrangements to ensure that children, the vulnerable and other members of the public who object to being filmed, are protected without undermining the broader transparency of the meeting.
11. The Chairman of the meeting has absolute discretion to stop or suspend recording if, in his/her opinion, continuing to do so would prejudice proceedings at the meeting or if the person is in breach of these rules. Examples of acts or activities that are likely to disrupt a meeting include:
 - (a) moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chairman;
 - (b) excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the debate/discussion;
 - (c) intrusive lighting or use flash photography;
 - (d) asking for people to repeat statements for the purposes of recording; and
 - (e) filming or taking photographs of members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed or photographed.
12. Persons who are recording are requested not to leave their equipment unattended and are responsible for their equipment at all times.

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13. The recording and reporting on meetings of the Parish Council, is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the laws of libel and defamation. The council expects that the recording will not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or infringement of the Parish Council's values or in a way that ridicules or shows a lack of respect for those in the recording. The Parish Council would expect any recording in breach of these rules to be removed from public view. The Parish Council will have no liability for material published by any other person unless it is itself undertaking the publication through its offices.
14. Persons undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted the above requirements whether they have read them or not.
15. The Parish Council is not liable for the actions of any person making a recording at a council meeting which identifies a member of the public or for any publication of that recording.
16. The Parish Council reserve the right to record, film or broadcast meetings using whatever format they deem appropriate.
 - (a) Any recording taken by the parish council will be stored electronically for a period of up to twelve months after which time they will be deleted/destroyed.
 - (b) Recordings held by the parish council will be for the exclusive use of the parish council.
18. The minutes of a council meeting remain the statutory and legally binding formal record of council decisions.

Further information

1. Please contact the Parish Clerk (holtparishcouncil@btinternet.com) if you have any questions.
2. The Government has also published the following plain English guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government.:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343182/140812_Openness_Guide.pdf

Date	Action
03 April 2019	Policy ADOPTED for publication on website
April 2020	Policy REVIEW date