

Donhead St Andrew Parish Council

Recording of Meetings, Social, Press and Media Policy

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Last Approved Review Date:

Next Review Date: March 2023

Current version: 1.0

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Donhead St Andrew Parish Council supports the principle of transparency and the rights of members of the public and the press to film, photograph, audio record and report on its Council and Committee meetings which are open to the public. The Parish Council welcomes responsible, balanced reporting of its meetings to promote greater transparency and awareness of its decision-making.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.
- 1.3 It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

2. Recording of public meetings:

- 2.1 Except where members of the public have been excluded due to the confidential nature of the business, in line with national legislation, the filming, photographing and audio recording of public Parish Council and Committee meetings is permitted.
- 2.2 Anybody wishing to film, photograph or audio record public meetings is asked to inform the Parish Clerk 24 hours in advance to ensure that the necessary arrangements can be made. This will include arrangements to inform the relevant Parish Council members, guest speakers and

public present and, where possible, to provide a separate area for any members of the public who do not wish to be included in the film, photographs or other recordings being made.

- 2.3 At the start of each meeting, the Chairman will announce that proceedings may be filmed, photographed or recorded and invite any members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed to move to the designated area.
- 2.4 Recording is restricted by legislation to the proceedings of the meeting, in other words from calling to order to the official closure of the meeting.
- 2.5 Anybody filming, photographing or audio recording public meetings is required to give due consideration at all times to ensure that there is no disruption to normal proceedings. In this regard, flash photography or additional lighting will not be permitted without the prior permission of the Chairperson.
- 2.6 In line with national legislation, the reporting, filming, photographing and audio recording must only relate to the public meeting itself and must not extend to anybody seated in the public section who does not form part of the proceedings. Filming, photographing or audio recording a member of the public without their prior express permission is not permitted.
- 2.7 Persons reporting on a meeting who act improperly or in a disruptive manner could be excluded from the meeting. 'Disruptive behaviour' would include any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of the meeting or impedes other members of the public from being able to see, hear or film etc., the proceedings.
- This might include:
- Moving outside designated public areas.
 - Excessive noise during debate.
 - Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography.
 - Asking people to repeat for the purpose of recording.
 - Failure to observe this protocol.
- 2.8 Those reporting on meetings should provide a balanced representation of the proceedings and not edit the film or recording in such a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings or which reflects only a single point expressed at the meeting.
- 2.9 Recording and reporting the council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those recording and reporting to ensure compliance, including data protection and defamation. They will be responsible for any allegations of breaches of the law which may result from their use of recorded material and are admitted to the Council Meeting on the basis that they accept

this responsibility. The Council reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings in appropriate circumstances.

- 2.10 The Council takes no responsibility for any recording made by others. It also takes no responsibility where a recording which it makes is subsequently used by any third party. Any third party making or editing a recording of a meeting shall in doing so be taken to have indemnified the Council against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands, liabilities, losses and expenses whatsoever relating to the making or use of that recording.
- 2.11 The formal record of any meeting will be the approved minutes taken by the Clerk to the Parish Council and approved by a vote of its members. These can be found on the Parish Council's website.

3. Contact with the media:

- 3.1 The Clerk and Members (Parish Councillors) should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- 3.2 The Council's primary Communications Officer shall be the Clerk. In the absence of the Clerk the role of Communications Officer will be carried out by the Council's Chair and/or Vice-Chair. The Communications Officer will update noticeboards and maintain the Council's website and social media accounts, liaising with the Members as appropriate, to provide a useful means of informing residents of the Council's services and its' activities.
- 3.3 Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Council's Communication Officer and/or Chairman in association with other members as required and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Council. All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.
- 3.4 If a member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Council, it should be referred to the Council's Communication Officer. A decision will then be made by the Council's Communication Officer and/or Chairman, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.
- 3.5 Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on an internet site. Members must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council Policy, are their own personal views. However, members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Councils Code of Conduct.

3.6 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made. Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

3.7 Statements made by the Chairman and the Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion.

4. Facebook/other social media:

4.1 This policy relates to the creation and management of a Facebook Page/other social media by the Parish Council. The aim of this policy is to set down rules and regulations to ensure proper use of social media and use it to interact in a stronger way with the Parish's people, advertising events and other projects of the Parish Council.

4.2 Social media accounts will be created and managed solely by the Council's Communication Officer. No Councillors will have access to the accounts for administration purposes.

4.3 Sending a message/post via Facebook , Twitter etc will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the council's Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing donheadstandrewpc@gmail.com

4.4 Any social media account should only link to pages of a local government organisation or organisations/causes relating to the Parish.

4.5 No religious or political views should be expressed under the biography.

4.6 It will be maintained by the Council's Communication Officer who will remove messages which include:

- Abusive language content
- Which may cause offence to a specific group of people eg comments on a person's sexuality, sexist comments, racial comments etc.
- Which contains potentially libellous comments

4.7 If friends/followers are repeatedly inappropriate then they will be blocked and denied access to the account.

5. Policy for non-compliance:

5.1 All members are expected to comply with this policy: failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Chairman.