

Policy and protocol on recording, photography and use of social media at meetings of the Council

1. Policy statement

- 1.1 Swanage Town 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 such as tweeting and blogging to report the meeting when it is open to the public.
- 1.2 The Council does, however, expect that anyone filming, audio-recording, taking photographs, or using social media will do so in a way that does not disrupt the meeting or does not involve filming children, vulnerable adults or those members of the public who have actively objected to being filmed. The use of flash photography is not permitted due to it being likely to become a distraction and annoyance.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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 and which enable persons not present at the meeting to see or hear the proceedings at the meeting as it takes place or later.

2. Protocol

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The Council will not vet those who want to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting. It would help us however in providing reasonable facilities if anyone wanting to film, audio-record, take photographs, or use social media to report the meeting were to notify the Town Clerk of their intention 24 hours before the meeting.

- 2.4 Irrespective of whether the Town 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 Town Council Officer who is present at the meeting.
- 2.5 The Town Council Officer will then tell 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 Chamber.
- 2.6 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 Chamber 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 Town Council Officer present. Failure to register an objection will be taken to indicate their consent to being filmed or photographed. The Town Council Officer will advise those wanting to film, or take photographs of the objection.
- 2.7 In accordance with Standing Order 71, the Chairman may require anyone who is filming, taking photographs, audio recording or using social media to record the meeting to leave the meeting if they act or if their activities disrupt the meeting. 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;
 - (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.

3. **Further information**

- 3.1 Please contact the Town Council (admin@swanage.gov.uk).
- 3.2 The Government has also published a [plain English guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343182/140812_Openness_Guide.pdf) for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government – see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343182/140812_Openness_Guide.pdf