POLICY ON AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHY AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

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Introduction

Neston Town Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it conducts its decision making. Recording, including filming, audio recording, taking photographs, blogging, tweeting and using other social media websites is permitted at Council meetings which are open to the public subject to the following:

The rules which the Council will apply are:

1. Anyone wishing to record must let the Chairperson/Chief Officer of the Council know prior to, or at the start of, the meeting and the recording must be overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting), but non-disruptive.

2. All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on recording councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. Any children present at the meeting are not to be filmed unless their parents/guardians have given their consent. Please be aware: photographing a Ward of Court is usually regarded as an actionable Contempt of Court.

3. At the beginning of each meeting, the Chairman will make an announcement that the meeting may be filmed or recorded. Meeting agendas will also carry this message.

4. Any member of the public has the right not to be recorded. We ensure that agendas for, and signage at, council meetings make it clear that recording can take place – if anyone speaking at the meeting does not wish to be recorded, they must let the Chairman of the meeting know.

5. Any person wishing to record Council meetings will be responsible for ensuring that any cabling, or electrical equipment that they use has been properly tested and installed and adheres to health and safety requirements. The Council will not be held liable for any injuries to the individual or members of the public caused by the recording of its meetings.

6. The Chairman of the meeting has absolute discretion to stop or suspend recording if in their opinion continuing to do so would prejudice proceedings at the meeting or if the person recording is in breach of these rules.

The circumstances in which this might occur might include:

- recording is disrupting the proceedings of the meeting
- there is public disturbance or a suspension of the meeting
- the meeting has resolved to exclude the public for reasons which are set down in the Council's Constitution

7. The recording must not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or infringement of the Council's values or in a way that ridicules or shows a lack of respect for those in the recording. The Council would expect any recording in breach of these rules to be removed from public view.

8. Meetings which take the form of hearings, may not always be suitable for recording due to the nature of some of the evidence to be given at the hearing, and the Chairman will use discretion to decide if recording is allowed.

9. If the Committee needs to discuss confidential or exempt information (and goes into Part II) and the public are excluded from the meeting, then all recording equipment will need to be removed immediately from the room.

10. The use of flash photography or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed in advance of the meeting and agreement reached on how it can be done without disrupting proceedings.

11. The Chief Officer must be informed in advance of the meeting if high-tech recording equipment is required so considerations and allowances can be made for trailing cables and areas to be cordoned off, if necessary, for public safety.

Please contact the Chief Officer: Ms Z Dean at Neston Town Council on 0151 336 3840 or email: council@nestontowncouncil.gov.uk in advance of the meeting you wish to record, and especially if the recording you wish to make involves large equipment or special requirements.

A failure to follow the above requirements may lead to a request to record being refused at subsequent Council meetings.

Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those who undertake the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Public Order Act Part III (1986 as amended), the Equality Act 2010 and the laws of libel and defamation.

The Council may itself photograph, film, record or broadcast at its meetings and may retain, use or dispose of such material in accordance with its retention and disposal policies. Recordings of Council meetings will be deleted from the (*iCloud, backup drive(s), or other storage system of the council)* storage and any other storage or computer device when the minutes of the meeting being recorded has been approved by Full Council.