

## Democracy and Standards Committee 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Recording of Council Meetings by the Press and Public Protocol</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Adele Wylie – Director of Legal &amp; Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) <a href="mailto:adele.wylie@northnorthants.gov.uk">adele.wylie@northnorthants.gov.uk</a></b>

### List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Recording of Council Meetings by the Press and Public Protocol

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

---

- 1.1. For the Committee to recommend to Full Council approval of a recording of Council Meetings Protocol applicable to the press and public attending meetings.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

---

- 2.1 It is proposed that a protocol be adopted to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of the Council, press and public are detailed in relation to the recording of Council meetings. This protocol only applies to those Council meetings (in full or in part) which are open to attendance by the press and public.
- 2.2 The suggested Protocol was adopted by the Shadow Authority and is similar to that previously used by former sovereign councils.
- 2.3 The Committee are being requested to agree amended Terms of Reference for the Committee, which if agreed, would be forwarded to Full Council for approval.

#### **3. Recommendations**

---

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Agree the Protocol (Appendix A) and forward to Full Council with a recommendation to approve.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations –
- To ensure that there are clear rules in place governing the recording of Council meetings by the press and public. Adoption of the Protocol will assist in ensuring consistency in application across all public Council meetings.

## **4. Report Background**

---

- 4.1 The rights of access to Council meetings are prescribed in law and within the Council's Constitution. Meetings covered by the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) allow press and public access except under certain specified circumstances. Details of press and public access are detailed within Part 2 Public Participation and Rights s.8 of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2 Best practice and Government guidance suggests that the press and public be permitted to record those meetings of the Council (in full or in part) where press and public are permitted to attend. It is considered best practice to enshrine rules regarding recording of meetings, for the benefit of the Council, the press, and the public. This will assist in ensuring consistency of approach across the various meetings held by the Authority.
- 4.3 The suggested Protocol (Appendix A) is based on rules previously adopted by the Shadow Authority, which were themselves based on rules introduced by former sovereign councils.
- 4.4 It is important to note that a Chair of a meeting has responsibility for the good conduct of said meeting and ensuring that the business prescribed on the agenda is dealt with in an efficient and effective manner. Should attendees (whether councillors, officers, press or public) in their actions disrupt the smooth running of a meeting, the Chair is permitted to take reasonable steps to ensure such disruption is addressed.
- 4.5 Approving a Protocol will assist in ensuring consistency of approach by the various Chairs appointed by Council and will assist the press and public in knowing the rules governing the recording of meetings. It is recognised given the various venues utilised by the Council for the holding of meetings that application of the Protocol may vary. It is important that the Protocol be adhered to, taking into account any physical limitations on the venue in use for a particular meeting.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

---

- 5.1 It is suggested that the contents of the Protocol provide a reasonable approach to this topic, ensuring the aspirations of press and public are recognised and accommodated, and ensuring that the Council can conduct its business in an efficient and effective manner.
- 5.2 The Protocol relates to on-site attendance by the press and public. In relation to virtual meetings, the Council currently has rules within Part 2 Meeting Procedure Rules (Appendix 1 - Remote Procedure Rules) introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those rules will be subject to review, particularly as it is intended that the live streaming of Council's committees will be re-introduced in due course; this is subject to the installation of appropriate equipment. Currently only some of the Executive Advisory Panels are live-streamed.
- 5.3 As stated previously, the Chair of a meeting has responsibility for the good conduct of a meeting, subject to advice from the appropriate officers in attendance. Application of the Protocol would be the responsibility of the Chair;

it is expected that the Chair will apply the Protocol in a reasonable and compliant manner subject to the need to conduct the business of a meeting in an efficient and effective manner.

## **6. Implications (including financial implications)**

---

### **6.1 Resources and Financial**

6.1.1 None specific to this report.

### **6.2 Legal**

6.2.1 The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to make administrative changes to the Constitution to reflect changes in the law, changes to the Council's management structure and other changes with no significant impact. The proposed protocol falls outside of this delegation.

6.2.2 The rights of the public and other attendees not to be filmed should be protected. Whilst there is an assumption that councillors and officers in formal attendance at a meeting have deemed consent, those in the public gallery and other attendees cannot be assumed to have given consent. Attendees in the area designated as the "public gallery" should not be recorded.

### **6.3 Risk**

6.3.1 The Council needs to ensure that the efficiency and effectiveness of its governance systems are monitored, and clear approved procedures and protocols are put in place with regard to the conduct of meetings.

### **6.4 Consultation**

6.4.1 Constitutional Working Group

### **6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny**

6.5.1 N/A.

### **6.6 Climate Impact**

6.6.1 None specific to this report.

### **6.7 Community Impact**

6.7.1 Recording of Council meetings can assist in ensuring that those unable to attend have an opportunity to follow discussions and debate. Whilst recording of meetings by the press and public is not a substitute for a full broadcast by the Council, it is important that there is a clear Protocol in place to facilitate such recordings.

## **7. Background Papers**

---

7.1 Council Constitution.

