

## **Protocol for Reporting and Commentating on public Council Meetings Agreed at 27 November 2014 Council**

### **I. Introduction.**

(a). By virtue of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 (“the Openness Regulations”), members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of the Council, the Executive and all other Committees and meetings to which the public have access.

(b). Reporting is not permitted where the public have been excluded from a particular meeting, or part of a meeting as permitted by law (for example to protect confidential information) and other restrictions apply to protect those individuals who do not wish to be recorded.

(c). For the purposes of the Openness Regulations, “reporting” means:

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting.

- using any other means for enabling persons not present at the meeting to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place

- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting orally or in writing, so that a report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present (note however that in accordance with paragraph 2.(d)(iii) below there is to be no **oral** reporting or commentary on a meeting as it takes place by a person present at the meeting).

(d). Any person attending a meeting (including Councillors) must, so far as is practicable, be afforded reasonable facilities for reporting and may use any communication method (eg the Internet), including social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter , to publish, post or otherwise share the results of their reporting activities. Subject to this Protocol, publication and dissemination may take place in the meeting or afterwards.

## 2. The Protocol.

The following Protocol sets out how reporting and commentating will be managed by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (“the Council”).

(a). Although there is no requirement so to do, it would be very helpful to the Council if persons wishing to record proceedings (or any part thereof) would notify the Councils Democratic Services Team (telephone number ) in advance of the meeting. That will assist the Council to make reasonable arrangements to accommodate the requirements of those wishing to record.

(b). At the start of the meeting, the Chairman will remind all present that recordings may be made in accordance with the Openness Regulations.

(c). The Chairman will make it clear that whilst the Council respects the right to record and communicate, the right must be exercised reasonably and having regard to the need for the orderly conduct of business at the meeting.

(d). To ensure that this objective is achieved, the following criteria will be adopted:

(i). Persons should remain seated whilst they are recording. Walking around the meeting room whilst recording will not be permitted.

(ii). If other members of the public present express a wish not to be filmed or photographed whilst they are speaking, this request should be respected.

(iii) **No oral reporting or commentary of the meeting be permitted on the meeting as it takes place by any person who is present at the meeting.** This restriction is imposed to avoid noise which could otherwise disrupt the meeting.

(iv) If in the opinion of the Chairman, any other behavior or activity is taking place which in his/her opinion is preventing the orderly conduct of business at the meeting (for example, the use of flash photography), the Chairman will exercise his/her discretion to adjourn the meeting.

(v) To avoid the possibility of accidents, the Council will not permit the use of electric sockets for electronic equipment

(e). Persons recording are reminded that the right to record whole (or part) of a meeting, extends only to those meetings (or part thereof) that the public are entitled to attend. If the public is lawfully excluded from the meeting at any stage (for example because confidential information is being discussed), the right to record immediately comes to an end for the whole of the period that the meeting is in “private” session.