Openness and Transparency Policy

1 Introduction

Scarning Parish Council is committed to pursuing openness and transparency in all its business and activities.

2 Legislation

The following legislation applies to the openness and transparency of the Parish Council.

- The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.
- The Law of Defamation
- The Law on Public Order offences (Crown Prosecution Service guidance on communication using social media).
- Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
- Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2008.
- Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.
- Data Protection Act 1998.

3 Recording Meetings

The Parish Council has adopted the following policy statement to accompany the agenda for its meetings.

(a) The Parish Council permits the filming, recording, photographing, blogging or tweeting of the content of its public meetings. Filming or photography should be notified to the Clerk and procedures agreed in advance of the meeting.

(b) Members of the public filing, recording, photographing, blogging or tweeting at the meeting **DO NOT** have the right to give an oral report or commentary during the meeting.

(c) Members of the public who are recording or filming all or part of a meeting should **NOT** edit their recording or film in any way that could lead to misrepresentation or misinterpretation of proceedings.

(d) Only by prior agreement will the use of flash photography or film lighting be allowed.

(e) Members of the public who are filming must have a constant awareness of the restrictions that apply to the filming of children and vulnerable people.

(f) Persons under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the Clerk or Chair and should sit in an area designated for that purpose.

(g) Filming or recording can only take place from a fixed position, which has been agreed in advance with the Chair or the Clerk to the Council.

(h) The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any actions or activities that in his/her opinion is disruptive.

(i) Should a notification be received that a person does not wish to be recorded, filmed etc, that request must be adhered to.

4 Limitations

Freedom of speech within the law (see the legislation quoted above) should be exercised with personal and social responsibility, showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others.

The legislation limits what can be reported on. This is only the proceedings of a meeting. The Parish Council expects that any reporting will focus on the proceedings and those who participate in the meeting rather than those who are simply attending the meeting. Those who participate in the meetings include councillors, members of the public who are permitted to speak during the meeting, officers and those invited by councillors to speak at a meeting.

5 Disruptive Behaviour

This could be any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of meetings or impedes members of the public from being able to see, hear or film the proceedings of a meeting.

Examples include:-

- Moving to areas outside the areas designated for the public without the consent of the Chair.
- Excessive noise in recording or setting up or re-siting equipment during the meeting.
- Intrusive lighting or the use of flash photography.
- Asking people to repeat statements for the purpose of recording.

Anyone may be excluded from a meeting if they act in a disruptive manner. Recording equipment must not be left in the room if the person has been excluded.

6 The Start of Parish Council Meetings

At the start of each meeting, the Chair will remind those in attendance and who will be participating in the meeting that they may be filmed, recorded, photographed or otherwise reported about. The Chair will remind everyone that reporting must be avoided in the separate sitting area for those who do not wish to be filmed (as above).

7 Monitoring and Review

The Parish Council is responsible for the monitoring and review of this policy. The Council will review its policy and remedial action will be taken as necessary.

Reviewed without amendment: January 2026.
Next review: January 2028.