



PROTOCOL CONCERNING THE RECORDING OF PUBLIC MEETINGS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Council's constitution contains a policy statement on Access to Information to the effect that it is committed to ensuring consistently high standards of accountability and transparency in local government. It seeks to deliver this commitment through a culture of openness in which the public, press and elected members know how best to influence decisions affecting the local community. Local people and local stakeholders deserve a consistently high standard of access to information to ensure that the Council's decision making is responsive to what they want.

2. SYSTEM OBJECTIVES

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 encourages councils to be pro-active in the provision of information. The recording of public meetings, making a copy available to data subjects (the individuals being recorded or spoken about) and the public at large, accords with this objective.

Recordings will also assist in the drafting of accurate minutes, investigation of complaints, protection of the Council from challenges, and in connection with the training of staff and members.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The Monitoring Officer is already responsible for keeping records of decisions and ensuring public access to information, and will be responsible for administering the recording of meetings.

4. RECORDINGS

The recording apparatus will be integral to the voice enhancement system installed in the Council Chamber. It may be active whenever that system is in use. It is therefore essential that everyone present remembers to switch on

their microphone when speaking and that the Chairman or advisor states the date and description of the meeting at its commencement.

When meetings are private (not open to the public) or when confidential or exempt items of business are transacted (when the press and public are excluded), access to replay/obtain copies, will be restricted in accordance with the Access to Information rules.

It is intended that Council Procedure Rules will be amended to preclude any other form of audio recording of meetings when the official system is operative.

5. OWNERSHIP CUSTODY AND DISCLOSURE

Ownership of all recordings will remain with South Kesteven District Council. The responsible officer will keep custody of them.

Any request to listen to a recording (or part thereof) must be made in writing to the responsible officer and state:-

- (1) The date and time of the relevant meeting.
- (2) The approximate time/nature of the item(s) of business.
- (3) Whether the person requesting the information is a data subject or his or her authorised agent.

Recordings may be edited to exclude any third party, confidential or exempt information at the absolute discretion of the responsible officer.

The Council may levy a fee for data subject access requests and/or for any costs involved in providing copies or transcripts of any recording. The fee shall not apply to requests from elected members of the Council.

6. RETENTION OF RECORDINGS

Recordings will be retained for a minimum period of ninety days. No maximum period for retention is prescribed, as they may be required to fulfil any of the stated objectives beyond that time.

7. PROTOCOL

This protocol will be included in the Council's Publication Scheme of documents available for inspection under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. COMPLAINTS

The Council's complaints procedure will be applicable to operation of the recording facility.

