



George Town Council

DRAFT Audio Recording of Council Meetings Policy

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Policy Statement

This operational Policy sets out the procedures for the audio recording of Council meetings in regard to the creation, storage, use, access and disposal of audio recordings (in accordance with the relevant legislative and policy requirements).

Policy Objective

This objective of this policy is to provide greater transparency, accountability and efficiency in relation to meetings of Council.

Statement of Principles

Audio recordings will be made of all **open** Council meetings and may be used by staff to assist with the preparation of the minutes or by Council to clarify a dispute or query relating to the Minutes that is raised during a subsequent meeting under the section "Confirmation of Minutes".

The recording does not replace the written minutes and a transcript of the recording will not be prepared.

All meetings of the Council shall be digitally recorded as provided for by Regulation 33 of the Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005 except for the proceedings of meetings or parts of meetings closed to the public in accordance with Regulation 15(2).

The Chairman is to ensure that no recording is made of the proceedings of a meeting or part of a meeting closed to the public in accordance with Regulation 15(2) except where the Council has specifically resolved to record the proceedings of that meeting or part thereof.

No audio recording of a Council meeting/s is to be duplicated or copied.

Link to Strategic Plan

George Town Council Strategic Plan 2012-2017

Goal 1 – Organisational Accountability

Aim: To be a responsible, accountable local government by:

Objective: Providing and maintaining a high standard of governance, performance and accountability.

Legislation

Regulation 33 of the Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005 provides:

33. Audio recording of meetings

- (1) A council may determine that an audio recording is to be made of any meeting or part of a meeting.
- (2) If a council so determines, the audio recording of a meeting or part of a meeting that is not closed to the public is to be:
 - (a) retained by the council for at least 6 months; and
 - (b) made available for listening on written request by any person.
- (3) The minutes of a meeting, once confirmed, prevail over the audio recording of the meeting.
- (4) A council may determine any other procedures relating to audio recording of meetings it considered appropriate.

Legislation (Cont.)

Unlike Parliament, Council meetings are not subject to parliamentary privilege and both Council and the individual may be liable for comments that may be regarded as offensive, derogatory and/or defamatory.

Definitions.

Audio recording or **recording** for the purposes of these guidelines refer to a digital audio file.

Council means George Town Council.

Workers means Council employees, elected members, contractors, volunteers

Related Documents.

Nil.

Procedure

Communication

This Policy is to be printed on the agenda of all Council meetings to inform the public that the proceedings are recorded.

A notice to inform the public that meeting proceedings are recorded is to be displayed at the entrance to a room in which a meeting, the proceedings of which are to be recorded, is to be held.

At the commencement of each meeting, the Chairperson shall notify those present, including members of the public, that an audio recording of the meeting will be made. It must be announced that the audio recording will last the length of the open meeting unless terminated in accordance with this policy.

Audio recording equipment

A Council Officer or an appointed contractor at the direction of a Council Officer will be responsible for the operation of the audio recording equipment including the commencement and termination of the recording in accordance with meeting procedures or as directed by the Chairperson.

The Chairperson has the discretion and authority at any time to direct the termination of the audio recording of the meeting. Such a direction however, shall only be given in exceptional circumstances (eg. if a person's safety may be placed at risk by the continuation of the audio recording).

Should the situation arise, due to technical difficulties, that audio recording will not be available, the Chairperson will advise those present that audio recording is not available.

Access by members of the public

The recording of the last two Council meetings will be made available on Council's website for listening by any person for the period they are retained by Council. Council makes this information available as a routine disclosure under the Right to Information Act 2009.

Procedure (Cont.)

Request for Copies

Requests for copies of Council meeting audio recordings **will not** be accepted unless in response to a formal request from an appropriate authority (ie. Ombudsman, Tasmania Police, Integrity Commission). Archived audio recordings retained by Council are to be made available providing such requests are permissible under the laws of the State of Tasmania.

Audio recordings by Individuals

Members of the public are not permitted to make audio recordings of Council meetings directly or indirectly.

Storage of recordings

The General Manager is to retain the audio recording of Council meetings for 6 months in accordance with Regulation 33 and to dispose of the files promptly following the expiry of that period. The General Manager is authorised, pursuant to *section 64 of the Local Government Act 1993 "Delegation by general manager"* to delegate these functions to a Council Officer.

Audio recordings will be stored securely so that only, Council staff authorised to do so by the General Manager, can access them.

Risk Management

This Policy aligns itself with objectives for risk management at George Town Council, namely:

- To protect Council's reputation; and
- Provide a basis for higher standards of accountability.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to George Town Council workers and the public.

Implementation and Review

This Policy will be implemented by Council and may be reviewed as required by Council or in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

Responsibility

Responsibility for the operation of this Policy rests with the General Manager.