



Press and Other Media Policy

This policy defines the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and addresses the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations for Councillors. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when Councillors deal with the media.

The Policy will be reviewed bi-annually from the month of approval by the Full Council and recommendations for proposed changes to it will be considered within two months for approval by Full Council.

1 KEY AIMS

The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and shall be proactive in making all reasonable efforts to make its decisions known to the community.

This will be through effective two-way communications. The media (press, radio, TV and internet) are crucially important in conveying information to the community, so the Council needs to maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with it to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council. It may also be necessary to explain to the media the reasons for policies and priorities.

It is important that the media has access to Councillors, the Clerk and to background information to assist it in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council may need to defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other available channels of communication if necessary.

2 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

Councillors, the Clerk and Officers should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.

Confidential documents, confidential discussions, exempt minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence must not be leaked to the media. If such a leak should occur, a Special Working Group will be established to investigate who was responsible and appropriate action will then be taken.

When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice may need to be taken from the Council's solicitor (but only via the Clerk) before any response is made.

There are a number of personal privacy issues for Councillors, the Clerk and Officers that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone numbers (although Councillors contact details are in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk before any response is made to the media. The Council recognises that personal data (including photographs relating to a Councillor, the Clerk or Officers are protected

under the Data Protection Act and this personal data will not be disclosed to the media without the consent of the person concerned.

When responding to approaches from the media, only the Chair and Clerk are authorised to give official responses on behalf of the Council. In specific cases the Chair and/or Clerk may authorise other Councillors to respond to media requests. All statements must reflect the Council's opinion.

There are occasions when it may be appropriate for the Council to submit a letter or statement, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in information submitted by other correspondents. Such letters or statements should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

Should a Councillor speak to or submit a letter to the press on any subject they should not use the term 'Parish Councillor' or give the impression, directly or implied, that they are writing on behalf of the Council.

A Councillor must not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer at meetings held in public before the press or in any other media.

The Council is under no obligation to provide a statement and in this case 'no comment' would usually be the appropriate response.

The Council acknowledges the right of the media to obtain information from the Council under the Freedom of Information Act. The Council will respond to such requests in accordance with the Act as laid out in the Council's Freedom of Information policy.

3 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes be sent to the media on request.

The media is encouraged to attend Council meetings. Seating and workspace will be made available.

4 PRESS RELEASES

All Council press releases must be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of press releases can be monitored.

Adopted at Full Council Meeting – 25th October 2023