

## PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.

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

### 2 KEY AIMS

2.1 The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions, and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

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

### 3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the Governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

3.2 The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

### 4 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

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

4.2 Confidential documents, exempt minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence

should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action taken.

4.3 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.

4.4 There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Councillors that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although Councillor 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.

4.5 All requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the Council should be co-ordinated by the Clerk or Chair. In the event of individual Councillors being contacted by the press or media, the enquiry should be referred to the Clerk in the first instance.

4.6 The Clerk will draft a response and discuss any respective statement, quotes and/or information to be provided with the Chair, (or Vice Chair if unavailable). The response should reflect the Council's opinion.

4.7 Councillors will be consulted before the statement is issued and if a Councillor wishes to make a comment then he/she must reply to the Clerk within a stipulated time period.

4.8 Statements will then be issued on behalf of the Council by the Clerk or Chair.

4.9 There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters 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.

## 5 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

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

5.2 The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be made available.

5.3 Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the Clerk and Chair of the meeting (see Standing Orders).

## 6 PRESS RELEASES

6.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular

issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

6.2 Press releases will be drafted by the Clerk after consultation with Councillors who must reply to the Clerk within a stipulated time period. Press releases should not be issued by an individual Councillor/s. Where appropriate, quotes within press statements can include both member and officer comments. Councillors are deterred from making comments, personal or not, other than in line with the agreed Council statement.

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

**This policy was reviewed and adopted on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026**