

Relations with the media policy

Policy for official Council communications with the Press and Media

Introduction

1. This policy does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive but sets out to provide guidance on how to deal with some of the practical issues that may arise when dealing with the Press and Media.

Policy

2. Any corporate communications with the Press and Media will be in writing via the Parish Clerk or Chairman of the Council.

3. The Clerk as the Proper Officer of the Council is authorised to receive all communications from the Press and Media and to issue Press Statements on behalf of the Council. In his/her absence enquirers will be referred to the Chairman.

4. All communications made by the Clerk will relate to the stated business and day to day management of the activities or adopted policy of the Council.

5. Enquiries relating to matters not yet considered by Council should be referred to the Chairman.

Members of the Council

6. All Councillors must observe the Code of Conduct in force whenever conducting the business of the council, or acting as a representative of the council.

7. A Councillor must not discuss with the press any matter which has been discussed under confidential items on the Council's agenda or at any other private briefing.

8. When speaking or providing written material to the Press and Media, Members must make clear the capacity, in which they are providing the information. For example: - + as Clerk or Chairman of the Council + as a private individual (i.e. letter to press for publication) but not necessarily representing the views of the council.

9. Councillors should be mindful of the decisions made by the Council and should not issue any verbal or written statement which undermines them, even if they voted against that decision.

10. When writing to the press as an individual, never imply you are stating Council policy e.g. by use of the prefix "Cllr" or Councillor" as a title.

Dealing with the Press

11. If the press or media approach you for comment on a controversial subject, it is usually safer to state "no comment" and ask the press to contact the Clerk.

12. When dealing with the Press verbally, members should remain calm. Be aware that statements made in innocence can look very different in print, than they did when spoken.

13. Ensure that your comments and views will not bring the Council, its Councillors or its staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous nor slanderous.

Meetings of Council and Committees

14. Copies of Agenda, Minutes and Reports sent to Members for meetings of the Council are available to the public and therefore the Press and Media and placed on the Council's web site.

15. At meetings, members of the Press are permitted to take notes of the proceedings, unless excluded by resolution of the Council, usually when matters of a confidential nature are being discussed.
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16. All press releases made on behalf of the Council will be prepared by the Clerk following any meetings of the Council.

17. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, is also authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a council meeting.