



## **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

This document sets out the framework for the Clerk and Parish Council Members to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the Parish Council's activities, the decisions it takes and the services it provides.

### **2. Media Opportunities**

"The Media" is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience, and includes broadcast media (radio and television), the internet, and a wide range of printed media (e.g. newspapers, free sheets, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets, posters).

### **3. Making Contact with the Media**

i) The Parish Council office will act as the Press Office. Any official contact with the media concerning the Parish Council's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides, are to be initiated through the Press office.

ii) Press releases, statements and publicity material will be prepared by the Clerk and/or Chairman in association with other Members as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Parish Council.

iii) Members of the Parish Council and employees who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Press Office so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.

iv) If a Member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council, it should be referred to the Press Office. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Chairman, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.

*v) Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a Member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on an internet site.*

*Members must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council Policy, are their own personal views.*

Members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Parish Council into disrepute, and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.

vi) All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.

### **4. Talking to the Media in response to a parish Council Press release**

i) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Press Office and the author of the press release.

ii) No Councillor should offer any comment without prior discussion with the Press Office or Chairperson, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)



iii) In answer to an unsolicited approach from a representative of the media or a request for an informal comment (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations) the views of the Parish Council only may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.

*In summary*

- a) No comment, if not discussed and agreed by the full Council, Chairperson or Press Office*
- b) Comments may be given only on items discussed at full Council and minuted*

## **5. 'Need to know'**

i) If a councillor becomes aware that they are likely to be misquoted in the media or something they have been involved in might give rise to a request from the media for a comment from the Parish Council they are asked to notify the Press Office or Chair as soon as practically possible. This could include a personal issue.

ii) If a councillor comes across a report in the media that misrepresents the Parish Council's view they should notify the Press Office or Chair so that the matter may be corrected as soon as possible.

iii) If a councillor becomes aware that someone is briefing against or misrepresenting the Parish Council's view in the media they are asked to inform the Press Officer or Chair of the individual, group or organisation's name.

## **6 Monitoring**

i) Councillors are asked to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, letters) about the Parish Council in order to know:

- a) whether press releases and statements issued by the Parish Council are picked up and used effectively.
- b) what members of the community are saying about the Parish Council.

ii) Members and employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Parish Council in the media – press cuttings should be sent to the Press Office.

iii) If a Councillor is involved in a group or organisation whose press release involves or comments on the Parish Council they should ask that a copy be sent to the Press Office before release. The Clerk will otherwise request prior to publication, if applicable, a copy of the wording to be used.

Signed: ...original signed Chairman

Adopted May 2010

*Amended 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016*

*Amendments: wording of paras 3ii, 4ii, 4iii, summary a), complete rewording item 5, addition of 6iii.*