

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

HAMBLEDON PARISH COUNCIL

Adopted 01 Oct 2018

Reviewed 01 Mar 2021 (Minutes Ref 1191)

Reviewed 01 Sept 2025 (Minutes Ref 2746;
no revisions)



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INTRODUCTION

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

- a. The Committee shall comprise of at least three Council members.
- b. Committee meetings shall be subject to a quorum of three members.
- c. Any corporate communications with the Press and Media will be in writing via the Parish Clerk or Chair of the Council.
- d. 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 Chair.
- e. 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.
- f. Enquiries relating to matters not yet considered by Council should be referred to the Chair.

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 Chair of the Council, or as a private individual but not necessarily representing the views of the council.
- d. 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.
- e. When writing to the press as an individual, Councillors should never imply that they are stating Council policy e.g. by use of the prefix "Cllr" or Councillor" as a title.

DEALING WITH THE PRESS

- a. If the Press or Media approach a Councillor for comment on a controversial subject, it is usually safer to state "no comment" and ask them to contact the Clerk.
- b. When dealing with the Press verbally, members should remain calm and be aware that spoken statements made in innocence can look very different in print. Councillors should

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

MEETINGS OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE

- a. Copies of agendas, 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 website.
- b. 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.

PRESS RELEASES

- a. All press releases made on behalf of the Council will be prepared by the Clerk following any meetings of the Council.
- b. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, is also authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a Council meeting.