



CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

THE GUILDHALL, CHIPPING NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE OX7 5NJ

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Town Clerk: Ms Luci Ashbourne

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

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.

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

The Council recognises that appropriate use of the media promotes the efficient operation of Town Council business

3. Contact with the Media

Members may be approached by the media or may wish to comment through them. Members dealing with the media or using their own social media accounts must remember that they are legally responsible for the content of any messages or comments and that the requirements and principles associated with the adopted Code of Conduct shall remain in force.

Members must not make public representation in the name of the Council unless authorised.

Members have the right to express personal opinions on local issues using the media but they should make it clear that such comments do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Council or its Committees. Members should be mindful to ensure that they do not bring the Council into disrepute.

Be aware that, in practice, any remarks made in the media by Members may be taken as an official statement of the Council.

If a Member is unaware of Council policy on any matter they should seek the advice of the Town Clerk.

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.

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.

Statements made by the Town Mayor and the Town Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion. 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 Town Clerk.

Should a Member be delegated to write a letter on behalf of the Town Council then the member is permitted to use the title Town Councillor, prior to submission to the press the member must obtain prior approval of the contents from the Town Clerk and Chairman of the committee before submitting the letter /article to the press.

4. Press Releases

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 Town Clerk and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

All press releases must be issued by the Town Clerk in order to ensure that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.