



Chideock Parish Council

CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY AND STRATEGY



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Reviewed and adopted 24th September 2024

Cllr Caroline Parkins

Parish Council Chair

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Parish Council for working with the media.

Without proper co-ordination, it would be difficult to ensure that the messages put out by the Parish Council are consistent and accurate. However, if communication is managed effectively, the Parish Council will be able to create and seize opportunities to communicate with partners and the public and build an accurate and positive reputation.

This Policy is advised by the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, as issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Code is statutory guidance and therefore Council's must have regard to it and follow its provisions.

Failure to follow the Parish Council's Press and Media Policy could lead to a breach of the statutory Code and risk adverse publicity, which in turn could damage the Council's and relevant Councillor's reputation. It is important that all Councillors and Officers understand the implications of this Code which this policy explains within a local context.

The Council must ensure that publicity is:

- Lawful
- Objective and even handed
- Appropriate
- Has regard to regulations on equality and diversity
- Handled with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the Council's Communications & Social Media Policy.

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

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

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.

The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders (Section 21) should be adhered to.

CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA AND HANDLING MEDIA ENQUIRIES

- All media approaches should be directed to the Parish Clerk, the Chairman or Vice Chairman. In the majority of cases, all responses to the media should be handled by the Parish Clerk.
- If other Councillors are contacted directly by the media for comment, they should liaise with the Clerk before responding.
- All statements made by the Clerk, or an authorised Councillor should reflect the Council's decisions and stated policies.
- Letters representing the views of the Council should only be submitted by the Clerk or Chairman.
- Councillors should not use the 'letters page' within the local press as a means of expressing their personal views.
- Councillors must consider the potential risk to the Parish Council, its reputation and the reputation of other councillors when dealing with the press.

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

Any request for an interview should be referred to the Clerk in the first instance. The Clerk, Chairman and/or Vice Chairman will determine which councillor is best placed to conduct the interview.

Where a councillor is authorised to speak on behalf of the Parish Council, it is their responsibility to ensure they are clear on the **corporate position** of the Parish Council, and that their response to questions accurately reflect the corporate view.

If a Councillor **has not been specifically authorised** by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, a Councillor who is asked for a comment should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such.

ATTENDANCES OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

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

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

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 Parish Council's position on a particular issue.

The Clerk, Chairman and/or Vice Chairman may draft a press release, however they must all 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 Parish Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

Press releases will be issued to local newspapers and copies will be made available on the Council's website. An edited version will be shared on the Parish Council's social media platforms, with a link to the full story.

NON-COUNCIL RELATED MEDIA

Councillors who have contact with the media in a personal capacity must make it clear to the journalist that they are speaking in a personal capacity and their views are not the views of the Parish Council.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Councillors must ensure they do not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with the press or other media on any matter which has been discussed under confidential items on council or committee agendas or at any other private briefing.

Councillors should act with integrity at all times when representing or acting on behalf of the council.

Councillors should not use the prefix 'Councillor' when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating Council policy, which is not necessarily consistent with your personal view.