

ELLISTOWN AND BATTERLATE PARISH COUNCIL MEDIA POLICY

1 Introduction

1.1 How the Council communicates and how that communication is received and perceived is important to the reputation of the Council. If not managed in a clear and effective way, confusion can arise over who is talking to whom, about what, and on whose behalf. As well as reflecting poorly on the Council, poor communication may create tensions within the Council.

1.2 The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and embraces opportunities for effective communications through the local media.

1.3 This policy therefore defines the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media to manage the Council's reputation in a positive and corporate way.

1.4 The media – print, radio, TV, internet – are important channels to convey information to the community; thereby increasing public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

1.5 Nothing in this policy is designed to prevent individual members from expressing their views to the media in their capacity as councillors, members of other organisations or private individuals PROVIDING it is made clear that these are personal views and not those of the Council as a whole.

2 The Legal Framework

2.1 The Council's media relations must be consistent with the provisions of:

(a) The law governing communications in local authorities contained in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988.

(b) The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

(c) The Code of Conduct for members as adopted by the Council (which incorporates the provisions and requirements of the National Model Code of Conduct set out in Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 1159).

(d) The Council's adopted Standing Orders.

2.2 In dealing with the media, the Clerk and members should always be aware of the need to comply with data protection requirements and to observe confidentiality.

2.3 The Council acknowledges the right of the media to obtain information under the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Pro-Active Media Relations

3.1 The Council will supply copies of its agenda and minutes to the local media on request .

3.2 The local media are encouraged to attend Council meetings. Seating and workspace will be made available for them.

3.3 The Clerk will act as the Council's Press Officer and will seek opportunities to engage with the local media to provide information on Council decisions, policies and activities or to respond to negative publicity.

3.4 The Clerk will be responsible for issuing all Council press releases.

3.5 Prior to issue, the Clerk will clear all press releases with the Chairman of the Council or the Chairman of any relevant committee.

3.6 In all appropriate cases, press releases should include a quote from the Chairman of the Council or other relevant councillor which is consistent with Council decisions and policies.

3.7 In all appropriate cases, the Chairman or other relevant councillor will act as the Council's spokesperson for interviews with the broadcast media.

3.8 All press releases issued will also be posted on the "News" section of the Council's website.

4. Re-Active Media Relations

4.1 If contacted direct by the media, councillors should NOT give an immediate response UNLESS they wish to do so in a personal capacity and this is made clear.

4.2 Where a response is being sought from someone acting as a spokesperson for the Council, the Clerk should be advised as soon as possible of who is asking what and the timescale for a response.

4.3 The Clerk will then advise on the content of the Council's response and who should be responding; liaising with the Chairman and/or other councillors as appropriate.

4.4 In the interests of accurate reporting, Council responses will normally be issued by the Clerk in writing.

4.5 The Clerk will monitor references to the Council in the local media and seek opportunities to correct any inaccuracies and respond to negative publicity.

Adopted by the Council September 2011