

POLICY TITLE

Press and Media Policy

REVISION DATE

May 2018

REPLACES POLICY

New Policy

POLICY AIM

Where information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, the Council shall endeavor to assist the media with enquires about the Council's functions, decisions, projects, consultations and actions. The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media. This policy will set out who is authorised to speak on behalf of the Council to ensure views and policies of the Council are present accurately, to ensure consistency when dealing with the press and media and to ensure the press and media are treated equally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Skegness Town Council is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decision and actions. This policy is subject to the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act, the General Data Protection Regulation and the Council's Standing Orders. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

POLICY STATEMENT

Press Protocol

- The Town Clerk as proper officer for the Council acts as press officer
- Political Party of group affiliation of any Member(s) will not be identified or quoted in any press release
- When the media seeks information on an issue that is, or likely to be, subject to legal proceedings, professional advice should be sought before any response is made
- During election year, from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day following the election, the Town Clerk would not normally issue press releases

Meetings

Meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to the public and press to attend, unless the Council resolves that their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by of the

confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Recording and reporting on meetings is permitted. Copies of agendas and supporting papers for a meeting are provided and reasonable facilities for the press are provided.

Press Releases

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Town Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other member of staff (other than the Deputy Town Clerk when deputising for the Clerk under delegation) has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council.

On contentious matters, the Clerk, will consult with the Mayor where there is insufficient time for a Council meeting before issuing a press statement. The Mayor may speak to the press on behalf of the Council where there is an agreed Council position or in case of emergency, national news story or another major event. In all other cases the Mayor should refer the press to the Council office.

Councillors

Councillors should be aware that according to case law the role of Councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. Councillors cannot speak on behalf of the Council, reporters should be directed to contact the Clerk if they want to carry out an interview or obtain a statement about the Council's business or actions.

When speaking to the Press or Media in any other capacity this should be made clear, for example as an individual or spokesperson for a community group or political party. Never use the prefix "Councillor" when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating Council policy. A Councillor should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer at meeting open to the press and public.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Council may be held legally liable for any statements made to the media by its employees and Councillors. It also has a responsibility to make sure the information we hold on clients, citizens and employees is held confidentially and securely.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Councillors and employees will be responsible for:

- making sure you have read and understood the Press & Media Policy and considered this in conjunction with the related policies below;
- meeting the standards set out in this Policy and any associated guidance which may be published from time to time; Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against Employees and Councillors being reported to the Monitoring Officer under the code of conduct.

- ensuring that you do not make a statement about a person, company or organisation that is considered to harm reputation. If the defamatory statement is written (in print or online) it is known as liable;
- reporting any breaches of the policy to the Town Clerk

MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Breaches of the policy to be reported to the Town Clerk	Everyone
Reports will be investigated, in conjunction with the Mayor (or Deputy Mayor where an allegation relates to the Mayor) and reported to Council.	Town Clerk
Changes in legislation.	Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk.

POLICY APPROVAL

Approved at Council Meeting on 23rd May 2018

POLICY REVIEW DATE

Every three years, or before if necessary. Next review due 23/05/21

RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Social Media Policy
 Community Engagement Policy
 Information Security Policy
 Code of Conduct
 Standing Orders