

Aldbourne Parish Council



PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted 5 February 2020

Next review 2021

1. Introduction

This policy describes how councillors and the clerk should act when in contact with the press or media. This includes their use of social media (e.g. blog, Facebook, Twitter) as well as print and broadcast media.

Policies on attendance at meetings are covered by Standing Orders.

Policies on sharing existing information are covered by the existing Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme, and Privacy Policy.

2. Responding to approaches from the press and media

2.1. Requests for factual information

Where possible councillors and the clerk may refer enquirers to the policies, agendas and minutes already published on the Council's website if these provide the necessary information. Councillors should advise the clerk of their response. No further comment should be offered. Other requests should be directed to the clerk who as appropriate will,

- respond in accordance with the Freedom of Information Policy, and privacy policy
or
- place the request on the agenda of the next meeting for discussion,
or
- contact the clerk, who will consult with the Chair & Vice-Chair, and whom (in an emergency) will decide if it is in the clear interests of residents to prepare a response in advance of the next meeting.

The clerk will inform councillors of all such requests and responses.

2.2. Requests for opinion

Neither a councillor nor the clerk should offer an opinion on behalf of the Council on a matter that has not been discussed and minuted. Such requests should be directed to the clerk who will arrange for them to be placed on a future agenda.

This is not intended to restrict the freedom of the councillors to offer personal opinions. They are however responsible for,

- Ensuring that it is clear that these opinions are their own and not those of the Council
- Abiding by the Councillors' Code of Conduct

2.3. Requests for interviews

Requests for interviews on behalf of the Council should be declined unless agreed at a meeting.

3. Making approaches to the press and media

3.1. The Council's own information and opinion

Subject which the Council wishes to publicise through the press or media should be discussed at a meeting where the purpose, content, timing and method of doing so can be agreed.

If it is agreed that a draft by a councillor or the clerk should be reviewed prior to publication this will be circulated by the clerk to confirm that it reflects the Council's intentions. If responses indicate conflicting opinions about its content then these must be discussed at a further meeting before publication.

When an unexpected request for a press or media release is made, and there is not sufficient time to bring it to the Council for a decision, the clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, may draft an item for publication. This can only be carried out for subjects previously discussed and approved by the Council. The clerk will inform councillors of all such requests and responses.

3.2. Third party information

Information may be received from third parties which the Council could publicise. These should be directed to the clerk.

Where this information is factual, publicly available, non confidential and likely to be of interest to residents the clerk may publicise it by any convenient means. This must be done in a manner that does not imply support from the Council of any particular view.