



ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL
c/o Mendip District Council, Cannard's Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT
E-mail: parish.clerksco@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: 07498 780143

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

NALC Model Media Policy November 2014

Adopted by SCOPC: 5th June 2019

Last Review Date:

Next Review Date: June 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council for working with the press / media as well as to provide guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the press / media.

This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.

Key Aims

The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community. The Council aims to maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with the media to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to provide accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities.

It is important that the press have access to the Clerk / Members and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

The Legal Framework

This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, other legislation which may apply and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Council's Code of Conduct.

Contact with the Press / Media

The Clerk and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media and always act in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

Should the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings, then legal advice should be sought before any response is made.

Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, any councillor who is asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is their personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such. Subject to the obligations of working within the Legal Framework above and not misrepresenting the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

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

The Clerk or or Chairman or the Chairs of Committees may draft a press release; however, they must all be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in the Legal Framework above are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored. Any statement should clearly reflect the Council's opinion

The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the relevant committee.

The Council's Clerk, or in their absence the Deputy Clerk, may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

On receipt of a request from the press or other media the Council is under no obligation to provide a statement and may prefer to make 'no comment'.

If a request for information involves a conflict of interest for a Councillor or the Clerk they must declare their interest and avoid involvement with the matter.

The Clerk should keep a record of all communications with the Press and other media.

Attendance of Media at Council Meetings

A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's Standing Orders.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the

meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission

Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted during the meeting.

The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

The Council's Standing Orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.
