

Woodham Mortimer with Hazeleigh Parish Council

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted at the Ordinary Parish Council meeting 09 February 2016
Minute item 37.16

1. INTRODUCTION

Woodham Mortimer with Hazeleigh Parish Council (“the Council”) Standing Order Items 21 and 5.k(xviii) state that requests from the press or other media in respect to comments and statements shall be handled in accordance with this Council’s press and media policy. This policy statement supplements the Council’s Standing Orders.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy is subject to the Council’s statutory obligations 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, and the Data Protection Act 1998. The Council must also have regard to the governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

3. CONTACT FOR THE COUNCIL

The Clerk is the first contact for all related media enquiries or in their absence the Chairman of the Council.

4. KEY AIMS

The media policy shall be:

- Open
- Transparent
- Honest
- Proactive and assertive
- Helpful to the media in facilitating photograph opportunities, interview and other reasonable requests

4.1 The Clerk and Councillors shall seek to promote the reputation of the organisation and respond quickly and effectively to media enquiries.

- 4.2 The Policy shall respect the confidential nature of information which is retained by the Council on individual cases or other matters which are officially specified as confidential.
- 4.3 Should a request arise which is, or is likely to be subject to legal proceedings then appropriate representative or legal advice will be taken before any response is made.
- 4.4 No decisions should be taken in respect to any request by an individual without due discussion and resolution at a full Council Meeting published in accordance with relevant statutory regulations.
- 4.5 Should individuals discuss matters with the media they must ensure it is clear that the opinions given are their own and not necessarily those of the Council.
- 4.6 Letters or emails representing the views of the Council should only be submitted following consultation with the Clerk and Chairman of the Council.
- 4.7 At all times consideration should be given as to how any correspondence may affect the reputation of the Council.
- 4.8 Where information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, the Council shall endeavour to assist the media with enquiries about the Council's functions, decisions and actions.

5 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1972 requires that all agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request, five working days prior to the meeting.
- 5.3 Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media should be made with prior notice to the Clerk and Chairman of the particular meeting.
- 5.4 Meetings of the council are open to the public and press unless the Council resolves that their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.
- 5.5 In accordance with standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting. This includes disruption of meeting business by way of recording and reporting proceedings.
- 5.6 Where meetings include time for public participation and subject to the Council's standing orders, media representatives may speak and ask questions.

6 GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO BE OBSERVED BY COUNCILLORS AND STAFF

- Maintain a composed, informed response and be certain of all associated facts.
- Ensure when making comments on behalf of the Council comments reflect Council policy.
- Ensure comments and views will not bring the Council, its Councillors or staff, into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous nor slanderous.

- The Council, its Councillors and Staff cannot disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure of information is prohibited by law.
- Councillors must act with integrity and observe the Members' Code of Conduct at all times when representing or acting on behalf of the Council.
- Councillors and staff must not communicate their personal views about the Council's business, decisions and actions.
- Councillors and Staff should not misrepresent the corporate position and views of the Council or damage the reputation of others in the Council, or the Council itself.
- If expressing personal views in private capacity, Councillors should not use their title "Councillor" and staff should not use their job title, this would imply Council policy.
- A copy of any written material sent to the Press and/or Media by a Councillor, as representing the Council, must be forwarded to the Clerk.
- A Councillor or Officer must not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with the Press on any matter which has been discussed under confidential items on the Council's agenda.
- Councillors should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an officer at meetings held in public or before the Press.

..... *Simon Brady*..... (Simon Brady Chairman to the Council)

09 February 2016