



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA PROTOCOL

Introduction

This document has been prepared as a guidance note for officers and elected members. It represents the policy of the Council in respect of its relationships with the press and media. The policy has been prepared to ensure consistency in the Council's dealing with the media and details who is authorised to speak on behalf of the Council. It has been prepared to ensure that the views and policy of the Council are presented accurately.

The overriding principle of this policy is that all elements of the media will be treated equally.

The Town Clerk and Officers of the Council

The Town Clerk, as the Proper Officer of the Council, is authorised to receive all communications from the press and media and to issue press statements on behalf of the Council, as instructed by Council, a Committee or as the Officer may consider appropriate. All communications made by the Town Clerk will relate to the stated business, day-to-day management of its activities or adopted policy of the Council. S/he is not expected or authorised to speculate on matters that have not been considered by the Council. Where such questions are put to the Town Clerk, s/he should refer the enquirer to all of the Group Leaders on the Council, the Chair of a Committee or the Town Mayor, as considered appropriate.

In the absence of the Town Clerk, media communications will be handled by the officer delegated to deputise for the Town Clerk in his/her absence. In the absence of these officers, enquirers will be referred to the Leader or Deputy Leader, if elected at the Annual Meeting of the Council, who will act as the Town Clerk for the purposes of this element of the policy.

No other officer of the Council, apart from the above, or who may be authorised by the Town Clerk, is authorised to speak or communicate with the media on any matter affecting the Council or its business.

[Note: 1. This requirement will not prevent any officer contacting the media in the capacity of an elected Union representative, or individually if in dispute with the Council]

Note 2: Town Council officers are expected to consult senior members (normally Committee Chairs) on any press matter concerning the key current initiatives or objectives of the Council. Officers are expected to use their judgement on which issues merit such consultation, but they will include any

the top ten projects contained within the 'Big Plan'. There will be an expectation of consultation with senior members on matters of above-average public concern, or in anticipation of a press enquiry where that is appropriate.]

Members of the Council

When speaking or providing written material to the media, Members should make it clear in what capacity they are providing information or, are responding to the enquiry or interview. For example as :

- Group Leader
- Chair of Committee/Sub-Committee
- Town Mayor
- An individual (i.e. letter to press for publication)
 Councillor
 Private individual
- Spokesperson or as press officer for a political party

A copy of any written material provided by a Member to the media, as representing the Council, shall be forwarded to the Town Clerk.

In providing information to the media, Members and Officers representing the Council will abide by the "Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity".

Meetings of Council and Committees

Copies of Agendas, Minutes and Reports sent to Members for meetings of the Council or its Committees or Sub-Committees will be posted to the media, without charge, at the same time, subject to officer discretion.

Facilities will be provided at meetings for the press to take notes of the proceedings.

As provided in the Council's Standing Orders, both the press and public may be excluded from a meeting whilst certain confidential matters (as provided for in the relevant legislation) are under discussion.

[Note: The Town Council, as a Parish Council, is governed by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960. The provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985, which gave greater public access to the proceedings of local authorities, do not apply to Parish Councils. However, in adopting the policy contained in this document the Town Council has included parts of the revised procedures.]

Adopted 23 May 2011