

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

This policy applies to employees, volunteers and Councillors of Dunstable Town Council.

Introduction

Dunstable Town Council welcomes enquiries from the Press and Media and recognises its relationship with the press helps communication with residents. The Council seeks to be as transparent as possible, cooperating at all times with the press and using the opportunities of the media to publicise events, projects and works being organised.

The press are permitted to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees, unless excluded under the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960.

Purpose

The aim of the policy is to ensure that Dunstable Town Council communicates through the press in the best way possible, reflecting the corporate view of the Council, without inhibiting councillor's individual roles.

Scope

The Media Policy includes:

- Official council press releases
- Councillor press correspondence
- Press protocol

The same principles apply for the written press, radio, television and other media.

Policy

Council Press Releases

- Press releases and statements will be prepared and issued by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive in consultation with Members as required;
- The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will act as the Council's Press Officer. Any official contact with the media concerning the Council's policies, the decisions it makes and services it provides are to be initiated through the Town Clerk & Chief Executive or delegated officers;
- Members who identify a media opportunity concerning the Council's policies, the decisions it makes and services it provides should discuss this with the Town Clerk

& Chief Executive who will, in consultation with other Members as appropriate, decide how this will be followed up;

If a Member or an employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Town Council, Members are free to provide a personal view, however any queries concerning the Council's policies, the decisions it makes and services it provides should be referred to the Town Clerk & Chief Executive. Employees are not to comment without agreement from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive or Head of Service. Where possible, press releases will include a quote from the Mayor or relevant Committee Chair.

Councillor Press Correspondence

- Individual Councillors can make their own statements relating to local issues and this policy is not designed to prevent any Member expressing a personal opinion through the media. Indeed, engaging directly with the press and social media can be a key tool for members seeking to engage with residents, represent local views and take part in public debate. However, Members must make it clear that any views expressed which differ from Council policy are their own personal views and should be recorded as such;
- Such releases, political or non-political, should bear no reference whatsoever to any officer and must not use the Council logo. Neither the Council address, telephone number nor website should be included as a point of contact;
- Where a journalist wishes to confirm what was said by an individual Councillor during a Council meeting, they will be referred to the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

Press Protocol

- The Town Clerk & Chief Executive is responsible for issuing official press releases on behalf of the Town Council;
- When the media seeks information on an issue that is, or likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then where necessary advice will be obtained from the Council's solicitor before any response is made;
- All press releases and other materials are filed for reference by the Town Clerk.

Roles

Whilst the Town Clerk & Chief Executive is the Press Officer, the spokesperson for the Council shall be the Mayor or in his/her absence, the Deputy Mayor, or the relevant Committee Chairman.