



# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## PRESS PROTOCOLS

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## **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 drafted 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 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. The Town Clerk 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 the enquirer should be referred 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 handled by Deputy Town Clerk. In the absence of these officers enquirers will be referred to the Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor who will act as the Town Clerk for the purposes of this element of the policy.

In relation to mayoral activities or council events the Communications & Promotions Officer may respond to queries from the media and may issue press releases.

No other officer of the Council apart from the above, or whom 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. Note2: 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. There will be an expectation of consultation with senior members on matters of above-average public concern, an in anticipation of 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
- As Chair of Committee
- As Town Mayor
- As individual (i.e. letter to press for publication to be signed Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms as appropriate)
- As spokesperson or as Press Officer for a political party

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

## **Meetings of Council and Committees**

Copies of Agenda and Minutes sent to Members for meetings of the Council or its Committees will be posted to the Media, without charge, at the same time.

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, does not apply to Parish Councils. However, in adopting the policy contained in this document the Town Council has included parts of the revised procedures]*

## **Communicating Decisions of the Council to the Media**

The Town Clerk will, in consultation with the Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chairman of the Council, communicate decisions of the Council to the media only when specifically requested to do so at the meeting.