

WALTON-IN-GORDANO PARISH COUNCIL

In the North Somerset Council Ward of Gordano Valley

WALTON-IN-GORDANO PARISH COUNCIL PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

The Parish Council's interaction with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying needs and measuring satisfaction.

Effective information, news and media relations can be a useful component of this activity.

1. The term media encompasses many different means of communicating information to a wide audience and whilst not exhaustive includes the following; radio, television, internet, newspapers, magazines, leaflets and posters.
2. If a Councillor receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council this must be referred as speedily as practicable to the Chairman and the Clerk. Where this is a matter where no Council Policy has yet been made, the matter should be considered by full Council at the next scheduled meeting or, if of sufficient importance, at an extraordinary meeting before a formal reply is given.
3. Council should make every effort to respond promptly to requests for information. However all enquiries or requests for statements must never be answered immediately and can only be responded to by the Chair or Vice Chair, or by the Clerk after consultation with and authorisation by the Chair or Vice Chair, if an appropriate Council Policy exists. If a Policy or position needs to be agreed, the matter must come before a full council meeting..

Where possible the Clerk will prepare all written Press Releases or Statements and copies should be retained. The format and content must be prepared in association with and agreed with the Chair or Vice Chair and other relevant members (should they be required.)

4. The disclosure and sharing of information should normally be restricted to matters that have been discussed as an Agenda item by the Parish Council with the exception of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. In the case of such a request, the Clerk should prepare a suggested course of action so that Council complies fully with the requirements of the Act and Council's Freedom of Information Policy.

There is the obligation to act with integrity and respect for Council policy once made. No information of a confidential nature may be disclosed and no matter relating to the conduct or capability of a Councillor at a Meeting can be disclosed.

5. No employee (other than the Clerk) or Councillor should contact the media on any matter relating to the Parish Council unless specifically authorised by the Chair (or in his/her absence) the Vice Chair. However nothing is contained in these guidelines that seeks to prevent any individual from expressing a **personal** opinion, for example by writing or posting an item on the internet.

Where personal views expressed differ from Council policy, this must be made clear. Care must be taken not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute or to undermine any decision made by the Council. The expression of such views by any member must take account of the role and responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct and Council's Code of Conduct.

6. When in attendance at any public meeting as a representative of the Parish Council, an individual is required to act with integrity at all times and ensure that any comments they make are entirely accurate and reflect the views of Council as a whole or, if not, that this is made clear.