



# **Shepton Mallet Town Council Media Policy**

Reviewed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018

# 11.

## Shepton Mallet Town Council

### Media Policy

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Shepton Mallet Town Council (the Council) is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decisions and actions. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with those who gather information for editorial publication in print, broadcast and electronic form (i.e., journalists, reporters, photographers, researchers, editors of newspapers and magazines, crew of TV and radio programmes and the like (“the media”)).
- 1.2 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. The Council may require the media to produce a valid UK press card or other identification.

#### 2 KEY AIMS

- 2.1 The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with the media to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and when necessary to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.
- 2.2 The Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts.

#### 3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 This policy is subject to the Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings Act) 1960, the Local Government Acts 1972 and 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Council’s Standing Orders.
- 3.2 The Council, its councillors and staff cannot disclose information that is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

## **4 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

- 4.1 The media shall contact the Council's clerk if it wishes to;
- i. Interview councillors or staff about the Council's decisions or actions
  - ii. Request a written or verbal statement from the Council about its decisions or actions

If the clerk is unavailable the media should contact the chairman of the Council or relevant committee.

- 4.2 Any verbal or written statement from the clerk or councillors in their official capacity to the media must represent the corporate position and views of the Council, not the individual or views of the clerk or councillor. No view expressed shall misrepresent the corporate position of the council.
- 4.3 Prior written consent of the Council is required if any interview by the media with councillors, the clerk or staff in their official capacity about the Council's business, decisions and actions is to take place.
- 4.4 Prior written consent of the Council is required before any councillor or staff in their official capacity (other than the clerk) would like to write articles or press release for publications on the Council's business, decisions and actions.
- 4.5 The clerk may contact the media if the Council would like to give an interview, provide a written or verbal statement or publish an article via the media about its business, decisions and actions.
- 4.6 Any letters or statements to the media from the Council to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents should be prepared and submitted for publication by the clerk. Such correspondence should be kept brief and balanced in tone and should not be drawn out over a protracted period of time.
- 4.7 The clerk and members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- 4.8 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.

## **5 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- 5.1 The meetings of the Council, its committees and sub-committees are open to the public (including the media) 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, as stated in the Council's Standing Orders 3(d).

- 5.2 Agendas, reports and minutes will be sent to the media on request. Postage or other necessary charges may apply.
- 5.3 The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and reasonable facilities will be made available.
- 5.4 The media are requested to notify the clerk if they intend to undertake filming or taping of Council proceedings (see policy on Recording of Public Meetings).

## **6 PRESS RELEASE**

- 6.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the clerk and members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial to the Council or the community.
- 6.2 The clerk or any member may draft a press release, subject to point 4.4 above, however all press releases must be issued by the clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council publications and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

End.