

Hardingstone Parish Council

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

This document sets out the framework for the Clerk and Parish Council Members to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the Parish Council's activities, the decisions it takes and the services it provides.

2. Media Opportunities

"The Media" is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience, and includes broadcast media (radio and television), the internet, and a wide range of printed media (e.g. newspapers, free sheets, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets, posters).

3. Making Contact with the Media

The Parish Council office will act as the Press Office. Any official contact with the media concerning the Parish Council's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides, are to be initiated through the Press office.

Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk and/or Chairman in association with other Members as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Parish Council. If the time constraints do not allow for a full council meeting to take place then the release or statement can be discussed and voted on via email. All Council members MUST respond.

Other Members of the Parish Council and employees who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Press Office so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.

If a Member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council, it should be referred to the Press Office. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Chairman, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.

Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a Member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on an internet site. Members must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council Policy, are their own personal views. However, Members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Parish Council into disrepute, and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.

All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.

4. Talking to the Media

In response to a Parish Council press release:

- a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Press Office and the author of the press release.
- b) No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)

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In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist or reporter (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations)

a) The views of the Parish Council may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.

In brief

a) No comment, if not discussed and agreed by the Council

b) Comments can be given on items discussed, and that have appeared in the minutes as long as the items have been at full Council or by email debate/vote in “time constraint” circumstances and where all councillors have responded. .

5. Monitoring

5.1 It is important to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, letters) about the Parish Council in order to know:

a) whether press releases and statements issued by the Parish Council are picked up and used effectively.

b) what members of the community are saying about the Parish Council.

5.2 Members and employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Parish Council in the media – original press cuttings should be sent to the Press Office.

5.3 The Clerk will request prior to publication, if applicable, a copy of the wording to be used.