



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL Press Liaison Policy

1) Introduction & Purpose

- 1.1 To remind Members that individual actions render Councillors at risk of challenge or exposure, which could bring the Council into disrepute. In particular, Members and Officers should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- 1.2 The policy is not issued with the intention of curbing freedom of speech. The purpose and intention is to establish a framework for effective working relationships with the media to ensure that Council issues and activity is undertaken in the public arena.
- 1.3 It is not the intention of the policy to prevent Councillors from expressing personal opinions.

2) Contact with the Media

- 2.1 Responses to the press relating to matters discussed by the Town Council shall be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Clerk.
- 2.2 The Mayor, and in their absence, the Deputy Mayor may give the views of the Council to the press on any non-confidential subject discussed by the Town Council.
- 2.3 The Chairman of Council Committees may also give the views of the Council Committee to the press on any non-confidential subject discussed by the Town Council.
- 2.4 Where Councillors wish to express a personal opinion, they must make it clear, at some point, that it is just that - a personal opinion. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Town Council be given in such a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.

Members should also be aware that when speaking personally, they have no Council indemnity, and must therefore ensure that their comments would not give rise to litigious action brought against them.

3) Best Practice

- 3.1 It is suggested that any Councillor who receives a phone call from a journalist, asking for comments, should refer the journalist to the Clerk, unless it is just to confirm a simple statement of fact in line with 2.2 and 2.3 above.
- 3.2 Any response, to any request of this nature, should be compiled by the Clerk together with the Councillor concerned.
- 3.3 Whenever possible, any information given to the press shall be given in writing, so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

- 3.4 In instances where Parish Councillors are also District and/or County Councillors, they should refrain from commenting on Parish matters by using the artifice of their District/County Council role.
- 3.5 An item named 'Press Statements' should be requested as an agenda item at meetings of outside bodies so that those present will know, albeit not necessarily agree, with the content of any subsequent press release on the subject in question on behalf of everyone involved.

Town Clerk
August, 2020