

Weston Beggard PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted by the Parish Council at a Meeting on 8th May 2018
Reviewed 20th May 2019

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedure for dealing with media enquiries. The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and understands that it plays an important role in the democratic process. The media can be a useful conduit for promoting the Parish Council and a good working relationship should be formed.

Contact with the media

The Parish Council agreed that the Chairman or Deputy Media Representative, in consultation with the Clerk (particularly if the issue is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings) should be the main point of contact for approaches from the media. All statements made must reflect the Parish Council's opinion. The Clerk must always submit letters on behalf of the Parish Council, for publication by newspapers or other media.

Dealing with enquiries

If anyone other than the Chairman/Deputy is approached regarding a media enquiry that person should not make a comment, or be drawn into conversation. A holding statement should be made and the Councillor should try to find out what the call is about. The person concerned should pass on details to the Chairman/Deputy.

The Chair/Deputy should gather his/her thoughts and make note before making a comment to the media. A comment should not be made "off the record" or should "no comment" be used as this can sound suspicious. It must be made clear whether the points expressed are the Councillor's own or those of the Parish Council. Issues must be presented clearly, fairly and as simply as possible.

Press Release

A press release should be no longer than 2 sides of A4. The most important aspects should come first followed by other points in order of descending importance. The Parish Council contact details should be at the end of the press release.

Apart from briefings about future matters, all press releases should answer the following questions:-

- What happened? (What will happen?)
- Where has it happened? (Where will it happen?)
- Why has it happened? (Why is it happening?)
- When has it happened? (When will it happen?)
- How has it happened?

The press release must be presented in an easy to read format.

Information routinely available

The Parish Council has produced a Publication Scheme, which sets out what information is available to the public and where to get it. Agendas, reports and Minutes will be available at least 3 clear days before a full Parish Council or Committee meeting on request to the Clerk. The Parish Council reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information, for example concerning commercial transactions, legal advice or personal information about staff. Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence must not be leaked to the live media. When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be subject to legal proceedings, the Clerk should be consulted and advice sought if necessary.

If a Councillor wishes to make a statement in his or her own right as a local resident, it must be made clear that the opinions given are their own and not those of the Parish Council. Councillors must not sign letters/statements using the title 'Parish Councillor'. If a Councillor is approached by the media because of their role as a Parish Councillor, he/she must refer them to the Chairman/Deputy.