



WARSOP PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

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1. Introduction

Warsop Parish Council recognises the importance of open, honest and effective communication with the press, media and the public. The Council seeks to ensure that all communications reflect the values, decisions and activities of the Council, and maintain its reputation for transparency, accuracy and impartiality.

This policy sets out how the Parish Council will engage with the press and media, and the roles and responsibilities of councillors and staff in doing so.

2. Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Establish a consistent approach to all communication with the media.
- Ensure that information released is accurate, appropriate and reflects the Council's agreed position.
- Protect the Council's reputation and prevent the spread of misinformation.
- Set out clear roles for staff and councillors in managing media enquiries and public statements.

3. Key Principles

- The Clerk is the official point of contact for all press and media enquiries relating to the Council.
- Press releases and official Council statements will be non-political, factual, and reflect agreed Council decisions.
- Individual councillors may express personal views but must make clear when they are not speaking on behalf of the Council.
- Councillors and staff must not disclose confidential information or make comments that could damage the Council's reputation.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Clerk

- Acts as the official spokesperson for the Council on administrative and operational matters – delegated to the Events & Liaison Coordinator in the absence of the Clerk
- Drafts and issues official press releases and responses, following consultation with the Chair or relevant committees where necessary.
- Ensures that all media content is accurate and consistent with Council policy.

Chair of the Council

- May act as the lead spokesperson on matters of policy or public interest, where authorised by the Council.
- May be consulted by the Clerk on official responses to media enquiries.

Councillors

- May respond to media enquiries in a personal capacity, but:
 - Must not claim to speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised.
 - Must not disclose confidential or exempt information.
 - Should act in accordance with the Code of Conduct, avoiding inflammatory or defamatory language.
- When expressing personal views, councillors should include a disclaimer such as:

"The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of Warsop Parish Council."

5. Press Releases and Statements

- Press releases will only be issued by or with the agreement of the Clerk, and must be:
 - Based on decisions or policies already approved by the Council.
 - Clear, concise and politically neutral.
- Press statements should not be used to promote individual councillors or political parties.

6. Media Enquiries

All press and media enquiries received by councillors or staff regarding Council business should be referred to the Clerk, unless the councillor is responding in a purely personal capacity.

In urgent cases, the Chair may respond on behalf of the Council if authorised to do so, in consultation with the Clerk.

7. Use of Social Media

Public comments made on social media platforms, even on personal accounts, may be interpreted as official Council views. Councillors and staff must therefore:

- Use respectful and responsible language.
- Avoid engaging in arguments or controversial debates in ways that could damage the Council's reputation.
- Clarify when expressing personal opinions that they do not represent the official stance of the Council.

8. Handling Negative Publicity

In the event of negative publicity or a media enquiry relating to a sensitive or controversial issue:

- The matter must be referred immediately to the Clerk.

- The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, may draft a formal statement or response.
- No individual councillor or staff member should comment publicly until an agreed position is established.

9. Confidentiality and Legal Considerations

- Councillors and staff must not share confidential or legally sensitive information with the media.
- Care must be taken to comply with data protection, defamation, and election (purdah) rules.
- Breaches of this policy may be considered a violation of the Council's Code of Conduct or staff disciplinary procedures.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required due to legislative changes or significant incidents.