

WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL PRESS & MEDIA POLICY

Adopted by the Council on: 20/03/2019

Minute Ref: 91/2018/c

Introduction

This document has been prepared as a guidance note. It represents the policy of the Council in respect of its relationships with the Press and Media. The policy has been prepared to ensure consistency in the Council's dealings with the Media and the recording/filming of Parish Council meetings.

The aim of the protocol is to ensure that the Parish Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner, and it is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech.

Communication with Press and/or Media

There are two types of press release-

1. Official Council Releases

An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole; will be written by the Clerk. It is non-party political and may include a quote from the relevant Councillor(s). This is usually the Chairman of the Council or Committee Chairman.

The Clerk, as the Proper Officer of the Council, is authorised to receive all communications from the Press and Media and to issue press releases/statements on behalf of the Council as instructed by the Council as a whole.

Whenever possible, any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

2. Councillor Press Releases

Councillor's press releases are personal (it must be clear that the comments are personal views and not the Parish Council's).

The release is written and issued by the Councillor responsible.

The release may or may not be political and should not include the name of the Parish Council or Parish Council details (address or telephone number). It would be beneficial for copies of intended releases, especially those of a factual nature, to be provided to the Parish Clerk. Councillors seeking advice can contact the Parish Clerk.

Meetings of Parish Council and Committees

Agendas and minutes of meetings are available on the Parish Council's web site.

As detailed in the Councils Standing Orders both the press/media and public may be excluded from a meeting whilst confidential matters are under discussion (as provided for in the relevant legislation).

Procedure for Recording Meetings.

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 gives members of the public/media the right to report on Parish Council and Committee meetings.

Unless the Parish Council or Committee meeting is confidential anyone has a right to record by audio and/or visual means with the following provisos: -

1. It is courteous to advise the Parish Clerk, before the meeting, that recording will take place.
2. The Parish Council will, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for the recording of the meeting.
3. No additional lighting or flash photography will be used except by agreement.
4. The person recording the meeting will be asked to cease recording if:
 - there is excessive noise from moving or setting up equipment;
 - there are interruptions to the smooth running of the meeting (e.g. requests that a person repeats a statement for the purposes of the recording or the distraction of the person(s) associated with the recording adding comments during the meeting);
5. The persons being recorded will be restricted to Councillors and the Clerk of the council unless non-members and the public have agreed. In the case of children agreement must be sought from the parent or guardian.
6. All recording must be overt – i.e. visible to anyone at the meeting.
7. The Parish Council is not liable for any actions of the person(s) recording that publicly identifies any member of the public or for any publication of the recording. Any persons recording the meeting are advised to obtain permission from members of the public present before publicising material that identifies members of the public.
8. Such rights as accorded in the legislation do not extend to recorded material being used:
 - out of sequence;
 - in a way that it misinterprets the proceedings;
 - in a manner that misinterprets the views of those speaking at the meeting.
9. Only the official signed minutes of the Parish Council and its Committees will be recognised as the formal, statutory and legally binding record of the meeting.