



MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY GT BARTON PARISH COUNCIL

1.0 Introduction and Legal Requirements

1.1 Gt Barton Parish Council's relationship with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.

1.2 Effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Parish Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for the Parish Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.

1.3 The community in this sense includes all residents and elected representatives, businesses, schools, shops, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.

1.4 This document sets out the framework for Parish Council Members and employees 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

2.1 "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.)

2.2 Different media respond more readily to certain factors. For example, newspapers are more likely to print a general interest story if supplied with a photograph, radio items tend to be quite brief with a short 'sound bite', and television producers will want moving pictures to illustrate a story.

3. Meetings

3.1 A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them, because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

3.2 Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders.

3.3 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 3.4 & 3.5 below apply.

3.4 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

3.5 Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

3.6 The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

Making Contact with the Media

3.1 The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the council. The general principle is that the Chairman of the Parish Council will act as the Press Officer. 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 officer.

3.2 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.

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

3.4 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 Officer. A decision will then be made, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.

3.5 This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity. If their views differ to the Council's corporate position they will make this clear. 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.

3.6 Employees (other than the Clerk) should not contact the media on any matter relating to the Parish Council unless specifically authorised by the Clerk and/or Chairman of the Council.

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

3.8 The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet.

4. Talking to the Media

4.1 In response to a Parish Council press release:

a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Press Officer 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.)

4.2 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.

b) The Press Officer should be informed so that facts can be checked and appropriate action taken.

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 clerk.

5.3 Anyone taking part in a radio or television broadcast should try to arrange for it to be recorded and a copy sent to the clerk. In the absence of a recording, a note of the broadcast's contents should be sent.

Media Relations policy adopted 2015.

Legal requirements and restrictions

This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, Openness of Local government Regulations 2014, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's standing orders and financial regulations. The Council's financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law.

Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

Protocol for the Reporting at Meetings of the Council or Committees

1. Except where members of the public have been excluded due to the confidential nature of the business, any person may film, photograph, audio record or use social media to report on meetings of the Council, or a committee, including any public participation session.
2. Reporting is restricted by legislation to the proceedings of the meeting, in other words from calling to order to the official closure of the meeting.
3. In accordance with Government guidelines, Council policy does not permit the filming or photographing of persons under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults without permission of a responsible adult. Any persons who object to being filmed or photographed and have moved to an area designated for this purpose should also not be filmed or photographed. However, the Council cannot guarantee that anyone will not be filmed or photographed.
4. Any person intending to report should give notice before the commencement of the meeting to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council. This will enable reasonable facilities to be afforded.
5. A notice indicating that meetings may be reported by use of filming etc. will be displayed at the meeting venue and a statement about reporting will also be included in relevant notices of meetings.
6. At the start of each meeting, the Chairman will announce that proceedings may be filmed, photographed or recorded and invite any members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed to move to the designated area.
7. Any filming or recording of meetings should be conducted overtly from a fixed point in an area of the meeting room specified by the Clerk or Chairman.
8. Live oral commentary will not be permitted at any time.
9. The use of flash photography or additional lighting will not be allowed unless agreement has been reached in advance of the meeting.
10. Recordings will not be made for reporting by the Council or any other person during any part of the meeting when the public and press are excluded.
11. Persons reporting on a meeting who act improperly or in a disruptive manner could be excluded from the meeting. 'Disruptive behaviour' would include any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of the meeting or impedes other members of the public from being able to see, hear or film etc., the proceedings. This might include:
 - Moving outside designated public areas

- Excessive noise during debate
- Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
- Asking people to repeat for the purpose of recording
- Failure to observe this protocol¹¹. Those reporting on meetings should not edit the recordings, films or photographs in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule, or show a lack of respect towards those being photographed, filmed or recorded.

12. Recording and reporting the council’s meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those recording and reporting to ensure compliance, including data protection and defamation. They will be responsible for any allegations of breaches of the law which may result from their use of recorded material and are admitted to the Council Meeting on the basis that they accept this responsibility. The Council reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings in appropriate circumstances.

13. The Council takes no responsibility for any recording made by others. It also takes no responsibility where a recording which it makes is subsequently used by any third party. Any third party making or editing a recording of a meeting shall in doing so be taken to have indemnified the Council against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands, liabilities, losses and expenses whatsoever relating to the making or use of that recording.

14. The Council asserts no copyright or control over recordings of meetings made by itself or others whilst on Council premises, subject to paragraph 12 above.

15. Generally, archived recordings made by the Council will be available on request.

Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

Anexed to Media Relations Policy 16.2.15

Item 6 – on 20/6/16 PC resolved that if a member of the public wished to sit in an area designated ‘private’ for filming purposes this would be arranged at the time.

11.11.19 – Council resolved to include the following on agenda: Any person intending to report (by sound or filming) should give notice before the meeting commences, to the clerk or chair of the Council.

Reviewed May 2021.....Next review due May 2022