



TRADITIONAL PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to define the roles, responsibilities, and framework for Illogan Parish Council to work with the press and media. The definition of press and media in this Policy includes newspapers, television, radio and excludes social media such as Facebook etc.

This Policy is a guide to Councillors and Officers on their relationships and conduct with the news media to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

It is not the intention of this Policy to curb the freedom of speech. The Council aims to maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council.

Publicity should:

- Be lawful
- Be cost effective
- Be objective
- Be even-handed
- Be appropriate
- Be consistent
- Have regard to equality and diversity
- Be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity
- Be a-political

Contact with the Media

- i. The Council Office is the Press Office and the Clerk the Press Officer. Any official contact with the media concerning the Parish Council's policies, decisions, and services will be initiated through the Press Office.
- ii. Officers and Members must always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- iii. Confidential documents, exempt minutes, reports, papers, and private correspondence must not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action will be taken.
- iv. Press releases will not contain or disclose personal data without the appropriate considerations, risk assessment, identification of lawful basis to do so etc required under the General Data Protection Regulations.



- v. Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Press Officer in association with other Members as required and will usually be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Parish Council.
- vi. If a media opportunity is identified it must be referred to the Press Office to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.
- vii. If a Councillor or employee is approached or receives an enquiry from the media about any matter relating to Illogan Parish Council, they must refer them to the Press Officer. The Press Officer is authorised to make an appropriate response to the Press/Media. All responses should be drafted by the press officer in liaison with two Councillors and should be representative of Council policy, the Council's position, be factual and lawful.
- viii. Employees must not contact the media on any matter relating to the Council unless specifically authorised by the Press Officer.
- ix. All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.
- x. There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter; for example, to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. However, such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must be submitted by the Press Office.
- xi. Letters representing the views of the Council should only be issued by the Press Office once the matter has been debated and agreed.
- xii. At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of the Council.
- xiii. Councillors must have due regard to the democratic process. If Members correspond with the press, they must only express the decisions of the Council that have already been debated and agreed. If items have not been debated by the Council, they must not be commented upon. Personal views and opinions must not be included in any correspondence.

Attendance of Press/Media at Council or Committee Meetings

- i. Agendas and minutes of meetings will be supplied to media outlets upon request and the dates of meetings will be available on the Council's website.
- ii. The Local Government Act 1972 requires that all agendas, reports, and minutes are sent to the media on request, prior to the meeting.



- iii. The media are encouraged to attend Council and Committee meetings and seating and workspace is available for their use.

Press Releases

- i. The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue.
- ii. It is the responsibility of all Officers and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial and to highlight these to the Press Office.
- iii. Any Officer or Member may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Press Officer.

The Legal Framework

- i. The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- ii. Local authorities should ensure that publicity complies with all applicable statutory provisions. Paid-for advertising must comply with the Advertising Standards Authority's Advertising Codes.
- iii. Part 3 of the Communications Act 2003 prohibits political advertising on television or radio. Local authorities must ensure that their publicity does not breach these restrictions.
- iv. Section 125 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 places a specific restriction on the publication by a local authority of material relating to a referendum under Part 7 of that Act, during the period of 28 days immediately before the referendum is held.
- v. Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007/2089) prohibits local authorities from publishing material in the 28 days immediately before a referendum which expresses support for, or opposition to a particular answer to a referendum question relating to the constitutional arrangements of the authority.
- vi. Regulation 15 of the Local Authorities (Referendums, Petitions and Directions) (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000/2852) prohibits local authorities from incurring expenditure to publish material which appears designed to influence people in deciding whether to sign a petition relating to the constitutional arrangements of the authority, or to assist others to publish such material.
- vii. Some aspects of the Code are relevant to this policy:



- Local authorities should ensure that publicity relating to policies and proposals from central government is balanced and factually accurate. Such publicity may set out the local authority's views and reasons for holding those views but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.
 - Any publicity describing the council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on the facts or explanation or both. Local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy. It is acceptable for local authority publicity to correct erroneous material which has been published by other parties, even though the material being corrected may have been published with the intention of influencing the public's opinions about the policies of the authority. Such publicity should seek to explain the facts in an objective manner.
 - Where paid-for advertising is used by local authorities, it should be clearly identified as being advertising. Paid-for advertising, including advertisements for the recruitment of staff, should not be used in any publication owned or controlled by a political party.
 - Advertisements for the recruitment of staff should reflect the tradition of political impartiality of local authority employees and should not (except in the case of advertisements relating to the appointment of staff pursuant to section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (assistants for political groups)) refer to any political activities or affiliations of candidates.
 - "Publicity touching on issues that are controversial, or on which there are arguments for and against, the views or policies of the Council should be handled with particular care. Issues must be presented clearly, fairly, and as simply as possible, although Councils should not oversimplify facts, issues, or arguments."
 - "Publicity should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards."
 - "Local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy."
- viii. When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings, then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.
- ix. There are several personal privacy issues for Officers and Members that must be handled carefully and sensitively in accordance with Freedom of Information and Data Protection. These issues include the release of personal information, such as home address and

Clerk: Mrs Sarah Rimell
Illogan Parish Council Community Office, Trevelyan Road, Illogan, TR16 4RG
Telephone: 01209 711433
Email: enquiries@illoganparishcouncil.gov.uk



telephone number, disciplinary/grievance procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk or other appropriate advisory body before any response is made to the media.

Review Date:	Reviewed By:	Amendments	Minute Number