



Traditional Press and Media Policy

1. Purpose

The Policy aims to:

- Define roles, responsibilities, and procedures for dealing with the traditional press and media (newspapers, TV, radio).
- Ensure smooth, professional, and lawful communication with the media.
- Promote constructive media relations to increase public awareness of Council services.
- Maintain objectivity, consistency, and political neutrality in all communications.

Scope:

- Applies to all Councillors and Officers.
- Does not include social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

2. Principles for Publicity

All Council publicity should:

- Be lawful, cost-effective, objective, and balanced.
- Consider equality and diversity.
- Be appropriate and apolitical.
- Comply with GDPR and other data protection legislation.
- Avoid creating risk or controversy during sensitive periods.

3. Contact with the Media

- Press Office: The Council Office acts as the central Press Office. Officers in this office manage all official media communications.
- Councillors/Employees: Must refer media enquiries to the Press Office. Employees are not permitted to contact media directly.
- Press Releases & Statements:
 - Drafted by Press Officers, sometimes with input from Members.



- Must only communicate matters debated and agreed by the Council.
- Must never disclose personal or confidential information.
- Letters to the Media:
 - Only submitted by the Press Office.
 - Must be brief, balanced, and approved by the Council.

Key Compliance Measures:

- Confidential documents and exempt minutes must **never be leaked**.
- All communications are **archived for reference**.

4. Media Attendance at Meetings

- Agendas and minutes are available on request.
- Media are encouraged to attend meetings; seating and workspace are provided.

5. Press Releases

- Purpose: Inform the public, highlight Council positions, or explain services.
- All Officers and Members should identify opportunities for press releases, but **all releases are issued by Press Officers**.

6. Legal Framework

- Governed by:
 - Local Government Acts 1986 & 1988
 - Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
 - Communications Act 2003 (prohibits political advertising on TV/radio)
 - Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (restrictions on referenda)
- Paid advertising must follow Advertising Standards Authority Codes.



- Publicity must be:
 - Factually accurate, objective, and balanced.
 - Non-partisan; must avoid attempting to influence public opinion on policy.
 - Careful around controversial issues or legal proceedings.
- Privacy issues for Officers/Members (home addresses, sickness, disciplinary matters) must comply with FOI and Data Protection laws, with advice sought from the Clerk.

7. Special Considerations

- Controversial issues: Must present clearly, fairly, simply—but without oversimplification.
- Public funds cannot be used to persuade the public to adopt a particular political view.
- Paid-for advertising must be clearly identified and remain politically neutral.
- Any media enquiry about legal matters or sensitive personal information requires solicitor or Clerk guidance.

Summary of Roles

Role	Responsibility
Press Office / Officers	Centralised contact point, drafts press releases, handles letters, ensures legal compliance, protects Council reputation
Councillors	Refer media enquiries, suggest press opportunities, participate in drafting if necessary
Employees	No direct contact with media; all communication goes through Press Office
Media	Receive agendas, minutes, and access to meetings; engage with Press Office