



Oliver's Battery Parish Council

Press and Media Policy

Introduction

This policy relates to official Council communications in particular with the press and media.

Policy

Any Council communications with the press and media will be in writing via the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.

The Clerk as the Proper Officer of the Council is authorised to receive all communications from the press and media. In his/her absence enquirers will be referred to the Chairman. The Clerk and Chairman should consult wherever practicable on all such communications and both are authorised to issue press statements on behalf of the Council.

All communications made by the Clerk will relate to the stated business and day to day management of the activities or adopted policy of the Council.

Enquiries relating to matters not yet considered by Council should be referred to the Chairman.

Members of the Council

A councillor must not discuss with the press any matter which has been discussed under confidential items on the Council's agenda or at any other private briefing.

When speaking or providing written material to the press, councillors must make clear the capacity, in which they are providing the information. For example:

- As Clerk or Chairman of the Council
- As a private individual (ie a letter to the press for publication) but not necessarily representing the views of the Council

Councillors should be mindful of the decisions made by the Council and should not issue any verbal or written statement which undermines them, even if they voted against that decision.

When writing to the press as an individual, councillors must never imply they are stating Council policy eg by use of the prefix “Cllr” or Councillor” as a title.

Dealing with the Press

If the press approach a councillor for comment on a controversial subject, it is usually safer to state “no comment” and ask the press to contact the Clerk.

When dealing with the press verbally, councillors should remain calm and be aware that statements made in innocence can look very different in print than they did when spoken.

Councillors should ensure that their comments and views will not bring the Council, its councillors or staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous nor slanderous.

Meetings of Council

Copies of Agendas and Minutes of meetings of the Council are available to the public and therefore the press and placed on the Council’s website.

At meetings, members of the press are permitted to take notes of the proceedings unless excluded by resolution of the Council, which is usually when matters of a confidential nature are being discussed.

Urgent communications with the Press

The Clerk and Chairman are authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a Council meeting.

Next review due: January 2024