



MEDIA AND PRESS POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Horsforth Town Council ("the Council") is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, please contact the Council's clerk or, in her absence, the deputy Clerk.
- 1.2 The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").
- 1.3 This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

2. Legal requirements and restrictions

- 2.1 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, 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.
- 2.2 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.

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 9 and 10 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.

4. Other communications with the media

- 4.1 This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.
- 4.2 The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear.
- 4.3 The Council's Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.
- 4.4 Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 5 above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

Press releases

Horsforth Town Council welcomes enquiries from the press and media and recognises that this facilitates a key line of communication with the residents which is of great importance. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Town Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner.

The Council's approach to the media should be:

- Open and honest
- Proactive
- Responsive and timely

There are two types of press release:

Official Council Releases

An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole, this will be written and issued by the Town Clerk in accordance with the minute of the meeting at which the matter was agreed. It is non-party political and may include a quote from Councillor(s).

The following protocol applies:

- All official Council press releases are to be issued on a template that includes the Town Council logo.
- In the years when elections occur, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election, no releases will be issued quoting Council Members. During this time any quotes will be from the Town Clerk.

Councillor Releases

Councillor's press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. When speaking to or submitting written communication to the media, unless a Councillor has been specifically authorised by the council to make representation on a particular issue, Councillors should make it clear that it is their personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such. This release may or may not be political and should not include a reference to the Town Council. Copies of intended releases, especially those of a factual nature, should be provided to the Town Clerk. Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of all councillor press releases to the media.

Should the Council receive a Freedom of Information request on a topic on which there is correspondence (email or written) from or with Members, normally that correspondence would have to be disclosed, unless it was exempt. The fact that the disclosure of the correspondence may prove embarrassing would not, of itself, prevent disclosure. In addition, care should be taken when processing personal data.

The Data Protection Act 1998 prevents the use of personal information other than for the purposes for which it was supplied. Members should bear this in mind when using any personal data which may be supplied to them by their constituents.

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