

ELLESMERE TOWN COUNCIL

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POLICY ON PRESS/MEDIA RELATIONS

Ellesmere Town Councils' Standing Orders (section21) state:

Relations with the press/media

- a Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

This policy on media relations forms part of a wider strategy of public relations. The policy has the following aims:

- To protect and promote the good reputation of the Town Council.
- To encourage an understanding between the Town Council and the public.
- To recognise the legitimate right of councillors to comment on issues relating to Ellesmere Town Council, whilst at the same time distinguishing personal comment from official Council communications.
- To recognise the legitimate role of the media in reporting the activities of the Town Council, whilst seeking to ensure that the reporting is fair and accurate.
- To foster mutual respect between the Town Council and the media.

The Council will adhere to the following procedure when handling media relations:

- 1 The Clerk will be the media contact for the Council and only the Clerk will issue press releases on behalf of the Council (in consultation with the Mayor or Chairman of the relevant committee, sub-committee or task and finish group).
- 2 Unless acting upon the specific instructions of the Council, Committee, Sub-committee or Task and Finish Group, the final contents of the press releases will be decided on by the Clerk.
- 3 The Clerk will issue press releases on Council initiatives, activities, policies, facilities and services.
- 4 The Clerk will respond to media inquiries about Council initiatives, activities, policies, facilities and services.
- 5 The Clerk will issue clarifications or corrections to the media, should they feel that they have misreported, or reported in an ambiguous way, any Council initiatives/activities/policies/facilities or services.
- 6 The Clerk will ensure, where relevant, that all press releases are sent the day following each meeting to the local press.
- 7 If members use the title 'councillor 'when writing letters for publication, they should include a sentence stating that they are not writing on behalf of the Council. The Clerk will issue a clarification or correction if a letter is published which does not state this.
- 8 When speaking to the media, councillors should make it known that they are not speaking on behalf of the Council. The Clerk will issue clarification or correction if a story states or implies that a councillor is speaking on behalf of the Council.
- 9 The Council is under no obligation to provide a statement – and may prefer to make 'no comment'.
- 10 Under no circumstances must anything of a confidential nature be disclosed to the press or the media.
- 11 The Council will not release information that is exempted. Exemptions will be:
 - > Personal data (without the consent of the person concerned).
 - > Confidential Minutes/Matters.

> Information likely to endanger the health or safety of the Councillor/Clerk/Assistant Clerk or Employee.

- 12 If a request for information involves a conflict of interest for a Councillor Or Clerk. In this event the Councillor or Clerk must declare his or her interest and avoid involvement in the matter.
- 13 This Policy will be reviewed annually and recommendations for changes should be approved by Full Council.
- 14 At Town Council's meetings – The press are welcomed to the meetings. Any information which is deemed personal or sensitive and not for the public domain, then the press/medial along with members of the public will be asked to leave the room.

Adopted by Full Council: Tuesday 6th May, 2014

This paper was considered by the Town Council on Thursday, 9th May 2019.

Reviewed: 13th May 2021.