

ELVETHAM HEATH PARISH COUNCIL Press & Media Policy

Adopted 21 May 2018 Minute Ref: 34/18

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within Elvetham Heath Parish Council ("The Council") for working with the press and media.

It is the intention of the policy to establish a framework for achieving an effective relationship with the media. It is not an attempt to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules or regulations.

Contact with the Media

1. When responding to approaches from the media, the Chairman of the Council should be the authorised contact in consultation with the Executive Officer. However, if the subject of an enquiry relates to the work of one of the committees, the Chairman of the council may delegate the authorised contact role to the relevant committee chairman.
2. Statements made must reflect the Council's opinion.
3. Councillors may talk to the media but must ensure that it is made clear that the opinions given are their own and not necessarily those of the Council.
4. Any corporate communications with the Press and Media will be in writing via the Executive Officer or Chairman of the Council.
5. The Executive Officer as the Proper Officer of the Council is authorised to receive all communications from the Press and Media and to issue Press Statements on behalf of the Council. In his/her absence enquirers will be referred to the Chairman.
6. All communications made by the Clerks will relate to the stated business and day to day management of the activities or adopted policy of the Council.
7. Enquiries relating to matters not yet considered by Council should be referred to the Chairman
8. Letters for press publication representing the views of the Council should only be issued by the Executive Officer with agreement from the Council or relevant committee.
9. If the press or media approach you for comment on a controversial subject, it is usually safer to state "no comment" and ask the press to contact the Executive Officer.
10. At all times, consideration should be given as to how any correspondence may affect the reputation of the Council.

Members of the Council

1. All Councillors must observe the Code of Conduct in force whenever conducting the business of the council or acting as a representative of the council.
2. 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.
3. When speaking or providing written material to the Press and Media, members must make clear the capacity, in which they are providing the information.
4. Councillors should be mindful of the decisions made by the Council and should not issue any verbal or written statement which undermines the Council's position, even if they voted against the decision.
5. When writing to the press as an individual, never imply you are stating Council policy e.g. by use of the prefix "Cllr" or Councillor" as a title.
6. No comments should be made without prior reference to the Executive Officer.

Meetings of Council and Committees

1. Copies of Agenda and Minutes are available to the public and therefore the Press and Media and placed on the Council's website.
2. Filming, photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of any meeting of the council or a committee should be conducted in accordance with the Council's protocol for reporting at meetings and should not disrupt the normal proceedings of the meeting in any way.

Press Releases

1. 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. It is the responsibility of all officers and councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.
2. Any officer or councillor may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Executive Officer following agreement by the council or relevant committee. The Executive Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, is also authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a council meeting.

Related Policies & Notices

- Social Media Policy
- Data Protection & Privacy Policy
- Code of Conduct