

# **Shipdham Parish Council**

## **Media Relations Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy applies to all forms of media, including posters, flyers, noticeboards, newspapers, radio and television, the local parish magazine and all forms of social media including web sites, emails, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, Instagram etc and other internet links. This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Public Recording of Council Meetings**, where there may be a media interest.

- 1.1 Shipdham Parish Council's relationship with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.
- 1.2 Effective media relationships are an important factor in establishing a good rapport between the Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for the Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent manner.
- 1.3 The community includes residents and their representatives, businesses, the school, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.
- 1.4 This document sets out the framework for Councillors, Council employees, and anyone who may represent the Council, when working with the media.

### **2. Media opportunities**

- 2.1 "Media" is more than the local newspaper. It encompasses many different means of communication with a wide audience, and includes broadcasting, the internet, social media sites, and printed media (i.e. newspapers, flyers, posters, Shipdham News etc.)
- 2.2 Depending on the situation, the media will react or respond in a number of ways. For instance newspapers are more likely to print a general interest story, if supplied with a photograph: radio items tend to be quite brief with a short "sound bite", and television producers will want moving pictures to illustrate a story. Media often requires an instant reaction, as news is only as good as it is current and interesting.

### **3. Making contact with the Media**

- 3.1 The general principle is that the Parish Clerk will act as the first point of contact. The Chairman and the Clerk will initiate any official contact with the media concerning the Council's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides.
- 3.2 Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk in association with the Chairman or other Councillors as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by Council, as minuted at Parish Council Meetings.

- 3.3 Other Councillors and Council employees or representatives who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Clerk so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.
- 3.4 If a Councillor, Council employee or representative receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Council, it should be referred to the Clerk. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Chairman, in consultation with other Councillors where necessary, about the format and content of any response.
- 3.5 Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a Councillor from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper, or posting an item on an internet site. Councillors must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council Policy, are their own personal views. However, Councillors should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute, and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct. Councillors should be mindful that any written material, considered to be written either as a representative of the council or in the councillor's name is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.
- 3.6 Employees (other than the Clerk) or representatives of the Council, should not contact the media on any matter relating to the Council unless specifically authorised by the Clerk and/or Chairman.
- 3.7 All press releases and other materials must be retained for the records.

#### **4. Talking to the Media**

- 4.1. In response to a Council press release:-
- a. Any media enquiry is to be referred to the Clerk, and the author of the press release
  - b. No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)
- 4.2 In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist or reporter (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations)
- a. The view of the Council may be expressed subject to the guidelines above
  - b. The Clerk should be informed so that the facts can be checked and appropriate action taken.

#### **5. Monitoring**

- 5.1 It is important to monitor the media (reports, articles, letters) about the Council to know whether press releases and statements issued by the Council are picked up and used effectively, and what members of the community are saying about the Council.
- 5.2 Councillors, Council employees and representatives, are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Council in the media – original press cuttings, where available, should be sent to the Clerk.

5.3 Anyone taking part in a radio or television broadcast should ask for it to be recorded and a copy sent to the Clerk. Wherever possible try to arrange an interview in advance (i.e not an instant reaction, in order that advice can be sought from the Clerk or Chairman). In the absence of a recording of the interview, a note of the broadcaster's comments should be provided and kept in the records.

Policy Adopted 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Minute 2600.