

CREETING ST. PETER PARISH COUNCIL

MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Creeting St. Peter 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 relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Parish Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for the Parish Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.
- 1.3 This document sets out the framework for Parish Council members and employees to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the Parish Council's activities, the decisions it take and the services it provides.

2. Making Contact with the Media

- 2.1 The general principle is that the Parish Clerk will act as the Press Office. Any official contact with the media concerning the Parish Council's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides, are to be initiated through the Parish Clerk.
- 2.2 Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Parish Clerk and/or Chair in association with other Members as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Parish Council.
- 2.3 Other Members of the Parish Council and employees who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Parish Clerk so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.
- 2.4 If a Member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council, it must be referred to the Parish Clerk or Chair. A decision will then be made by the Parish Clerk and Chair, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.
- 2.5 Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a Member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for

example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on an internet site. Members must make it clear that any views expressed are their own personal views. However, Members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Parish Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.

- 2.6 Employees should not contact the media on any matter relating to the Parish Council unless specifically authorised by the Chair.
- 2.7 All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.
- 2.8 Members should ensure when communicating any information on social media or on other public platforms that they clearly state it is them acting as an individual or as a Member. Whether acting as an individual or Member, information must not be misleading, in any way false, or slanderous.
- 2.9 Members must ensure that any comments they make will not bring the Council into disrepute.
- 2.10 The Parish Clerk should be contacted for advice if a Member is in any doubt of policies.
- 2.11 The Member should be open to clarifying any comment or statement which is deemed unclear or misleading by the Parish Clerk.
- 2.12 The Member should in turn give clear and concise reasons for this; and should give options on how this can be resolved to the Member(s) in question. These can include issuing a clarification on the comments, providing evidence in support of comments, withdrawing comments and/or offering apologies for any offence or concerns caused.
- 2.13 Members must be aware that even when acting as an individual they must still comply with this policy as they are bound by the LGA Code of Conduct as elected representatives.

3. Talking to the Media

- 3.1 In response to a Parish Council press release:
 - a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Parish Council office.
 - 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.)
- 3.2 In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist or reporter (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations).

- (a) The views of the Parish Council may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.
- (b) The Parish Clerk should be informed so that facts can be checked and appropriate actions taken.