

Press and Media Policy

1. Introduction

Ilmington Parish Council ('the Council') strives to maintain positive, constructive media relations and will work with the media to increase public awareness of the services provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the parties.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

2. Key Aims

The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must provide accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities.

It is important that the press have access to the Clerk/ Members and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

3. The Legal Framework

The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the Government's [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity](#).

The Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

4. Contact With The Media

The Clerk and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.

Confidential documents, reports, papers and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action taken.

When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's insurance provider and solicitor before any response is made. Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

Personal privacy issues relating to the Clerk and Members must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although some Member contact details are in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk or, where appropriate another advisor, before any response is made to the media.

When responding to approaches from the media, the Clerk and/or the Chairman are authorised to make contact with the media.

Statements made by the Chairman and the Clerk should reflect the Council's agreed position.

There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in a private capacity. Subject to the obligations not to disclose confidential information and not to misrepresent the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their own position and views. They must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given are their own and not necessarily those of the Council.

5. Attendances Of Media At Council Meetings

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request.

The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be made available.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees is permitted unless (a) the Council has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (b) such activities disrupt the proceedings.

Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

6. Press Releases

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 the Clerk and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

The Clerk or any Member may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

7. Adoption and review

This policy was approved and re-adopted by the Council at its meeting on 29 May 2025.

It will be reviewed annually or earlier following new legal requirements.