

# KEGWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

## Media Policy



<b>Approved by:</b>	Full Council	<b>Date:</b> 05/06/23
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Kegworth 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.

Effective media relations are an important factor in maintaining 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.

The community in this sense includes all stakeholders – residents, elected representatives, businesses, schools, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.

This document sets out the framework for Parish Councillors, Officers/Employees to follow in contacting various media and informing the public about current affairs directly affecting the Parish.

## **MEDIA**

The Media is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience, and includes:

- Broadcast Media (radio and television)
- Internet (website and social media)
- Printed media (newspapers, newsletters, magazines, leaflets, the Council's Annual Report)
- Council Agendas and information on Council noticeboards

## **CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

The Parish Clerk 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 the absence of the Parish Clerk, media communications will be handled by the chairman. Wherever possible, councillors will be advised of the content of the press statements by email prior to them being sent.

All communications made by the Parish Clerk will relate to the stated business and day to day management of the activities or adopted policy of the Council. The Clerk is not expected or authorised to speculate on matters that have not been considered by the Council.

Where such questions are put to the Clerk, they should inform the enquirer that they will be notified of a response within 24 hours where practical. The Clerk should then consult with the Chairman (or Vice Chair in their absence) on a suitable response, which may in fact be "no comment".

Where the Clerk receives incoming, sensitive information of public interest, this will be shared with councillors by email before being shared publicly.

## **ISSUES TO BE AWARE OF WHEN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing a Councillor from expressing their personal opinion through the media, for example writing to a newspaper, or posting an item on the internet, or on a social media site, but Councillors must make it clear that any views expressed are their own personal views and that they do not represent the views of the Parish Council.

Councillors must not use the prefix “Cllr” when writing to the press as an individual as this would imply that they are stating Council policy. It is the Councillor’s responsibility to make it clear that it is their own personal opinion.

Councillors and staff should take great care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Parish Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Parish Council’s Code of Conduct.

All Councillors and staff should be particularly cautious if using social media sites. The Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels, and therefore ask for the same in return from those who choose to engage.

Council staff and councillors must never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment. They have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable and will be reported.

A Councillor or staff member must not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with the press on any matter which has been discussed as a confidential item (in closed session) on the Council’s or a committees’ agenda, or at any other private briefing, and incoming, sensitive information which has not yet been released to the public.

Care should be taken if the press or media make approaches for comment on a controversial subject, and councillors and staff must not be led into stating something they did not really mean to say in their role as Parish Councillor or employee. If unsure, they should simply state “no comment” and ask the press to contact the Parish Council Office.

Councillors and staff have an obligation to respect Council policy once made and whilst it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make clear that he or she disagreed with a policy and voted against it (if this took place in an open session), they should not seek to undermine a decision through the press.

A Councillor must never raise matters or make comment on subjects relating to the conduct

or capability of an Officer/Employee at meetings held in public or to the media.

## **TALKING TO THE MEDIA AS A PARISH COUNCILLOR**

In response to a Parish Council press release:

- Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Parish Clerk.
- No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion with the Parish Clerk, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)

In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist, reporter, or any author of an article likely to be placed in the public domain, including enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations:

- The views of the Parish Council may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.
- The Parish Clerk should be informed so that they are fully apprised of the communication that has taken place.

It may be simpler to say that you are unable to speak on behalf of the Parish Council. The Clerk is the person to whom any approaches should be made and anything you do say is in your own capacity and not that of a councillor or staff member.

## **MONITORING**

It is important to monitor the media for news items about the Parish Council in order to know:

- Whether press releases and statements issued by the Parish Council are picked up and used effectively.
- What the community is saying about the Parish Council.
- What the community expects the Parish Council to be informed about, to debate, and to publish a position on, if it falls within the powers and remits of the Parish Council.

Councillors and staff are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Parish Council in all medias, to inform the Parish Clerk and provide evidence, if possible.