

LOOE TOWN COUNCIL

K O N S E L T R E L O G H

Media & Publicity Policy



Re-Adopted by Council:
15th May 2023

Next Review due: 31st May 2024

LOOE TOWN COUNCIL



MEDIA & PUBLICITY POLICY

1. POLICY

The Council is accountable to the electorate for its actions and shall therefore, as far as practical, keep the general public fully informed of its proposals, decisions, actions, activities and policies by means of regular notices, electronic communications, website updates, press releases and use of social media platforms.

The Council recognises the important role that the press and media plays in keeping the general public informed of current local events and shall therefore make every effort to build a good working relationship with such organisations and respond sympathetically and in a timely manner to requests for information from them regarding the Council's business.

All news and press releases made on behalf of the Town Council must be authorised by the Town Clerk, or a Senior Manager after consultation with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Committee Chair as appropriate.

2. PROTOCOL

2.1 Purpose

This Protocol is to guide both Councillors and Officers of the Council in their relations with the Press and Media in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

This protocol does not seek to be comprehensive but sets out to provide guidance on how to deal with some issues that may arise when dealing with the Press and Media.

A Councillor must observe the Town Council's Code of Conduct whenever he or she conducts the business of the Council, conducts the business of the office to which he or she has been elected or appointed and acts as a representative of the Council.

A Councillor must not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any use of social media or contact with the press or media regarding any item which has been discussed under confidential items on the Council's or Committees' agenda.

A Councillor should act with integrity at all times when representing or acting on behalf of Looe Town Council.

2.2 Dealing with the Press and Media

Responses to the press or media relating to matters discussed by the Town Council shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Town Clerk or, in the absence of a Town Clerk a Senior Manager. The Town Mayor/Committee Chairs are also authorised to give the views of the Council to the press or media on any non-confidential subject discussed by Council in liaison with the Town Clerk or Senior Manager. Whenever possible any information given to the press or media shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Council be given to the press or media in a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.

When dealing with news media Councillors should:

- be informed and certain of all their facts – if a Councillor is uncertain about the facts please refer the query to the Town Clerk or Senior Manager.
- ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Town Council they are aware what Council policy is and their comments reflect that policy
- be calm
- ensure that their comments and views will not bring the Council, its Councillors or its staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous or slanderous

2.3 Issues to be Aware of

Councillors should be aware that case law states that the role of councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful about expressing individual views to the press, whether or not they relate to matters of Council business. Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council policy once made. While 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 or media.

Councillors should be aware that when dealing with the press or media, statements made in all innocence may be presented to the general public in a manner different to that which was originally intended. It is strongly recommended that any statement or communication to the press or media be in writing prior to being expressed, to avoid ambiguity or mis-representation.