

Ilminster Town Council Media and Publicity Policy
Approved By Council 18 June 2013
Reviewed and Amended By Town Council 17 July 2016

Note: This policy and the associated procedures do not preclude an individual Councillor talking to the media on a personal basis, but in such a case it should be made clear that is the individual's own opinion / suggestion, not that of the Town Council, and the use of the title Councillor should be avoided.

Policy Statement

Ilminster Town Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers information and takes decisions. As a Town Council we will therefore proactively seek opportunities to publish information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what the Town Council is doing.

Procedures

Notes:

- (i) When the Mayor is unavailable the Deputy Mayor will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities.
- (ii) When the Town Clerk is unavailable the Deputy Town Clerk will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities

(A) Requests from the Media

1. The Mayor and the Town Clerk should be made aware of all approaches from the media for interviews, statements or information. (This includes any approaches made to individual Councillors.) A simple register will be kept in the Town Council offices detailing all requests and the response.
2. Any request from the media will be discussed by the Mayor and Town Clerk and then forwarded to the most appropriate person - Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair or Vice-Chair, Town Clerk or combination of those people to make a response on behalf of the Town Council.
3. Prior to its release, the Mayor and Town Clerk should be made aware of the broad content of any response.

(B) Response to Media Articles, published letters, on-line comments, tweets, facebook items

1. Every situation must be carefully assessed and in many cases a response will not be appropriate.
2. Anyone seeing an article / item and thinking a response may be needed should inform the Mayor and the Town Clerk.
3. In assessing whether or not a response is appropriate the following will be considered:
 - Is the article / item in question factually accurate?
 - Is the article / item expressing a personal view – and if so is that clearly stated?
 - Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?
4. Any potential response will be discussed by the Town Clerk and the Mayor and then forwarded to the most appropriate person - Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair or Vice-Chair, Town Clerk or combination of those people to prepare a response on behalf of the Town Council.
5. Prior to its release the Mayor and Town Clerk should be made aware of the broad content of any response where they were not involved in its preparation.

(C) Media Releases

1. The Town Clerk, Mayor and Committee Chairs will identify issues and stories that have the potential to be interest to the public.
2. The Town Clerk will draft media releases consulting with the Mayor and Committee Chairs or any individual Councillor as appropriate.
3. An information copy of the final media release will be sent to the Mayor and any Councillor who is quoted in the text.
4. Media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor.
5. A copy of the media release will be posted on the Town Council's website.
6. A copy of the media release will be sent to Councillors and staff with the next edition of the Clerk's Update.

(D) Media Training

1. Opportunities will be made for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and the Town Clerk to attend training in dealing with the media.

(E) Decision Making

1. The Town Council's Standing Orders (No 28) refer to relations with the press / media and the Town Council's policy - this media and publicity policy and procedures is the relevant policy.
2. Any decision about the content of media releases or information to be supplied to the media or any response to any media item will be taken by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor. (This delegation complies with the legislative restriction that an individual Town Councillor cannot make a decision on behalf of the Council.)