

BREDHURST PARISH COUNCIL

MEDIA POLICY

Adopted: October 2017

Reviewed: May 2023



INTRODUCTION

1. Bredhurst Parish Council strives to be open and accessible to the media at all times.
2. The council uses external communication with the media for a number of purposes:
 - To broaden and strengthen local democracy through a well-informed public
 - To raise awareness of the council's policies, services and functions
 - To publicise meetings and decisions of the council and other decision making committees
 - To promote the council's role as a community leader
 - To publicise the council's role in partnership initiative with other bodies
 - To enable local people to have an effective, well-informed dialogue with the council about services and policies and the needs of individuals and communities
 - In an emergency, to highlight public safety messages and keep people informed
3. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities of the clerk and councillors in dealing with the media.
4. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media.
5. The 'media' includes the press, radio, television and social media.
6. The clerk and councillors should always have due regard for the reputation of the council in all their dealings with the media and should ensure they abide by the Code of Conduct at all times.
7. Confidential matters should not be discussed in any circumstance.

MEETINGS

8. Agendas and minutes of meetings should be made available to the media on request.
9. Attendance of the media at meetings is welcomed and facilities will be provided for taking reports if requested.
10. The press are entitled to report on the proceedings of a meeting, including filming, photographing, recording or making written commentary.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA

11. Contact with the media, either instigated or as a response, should be via the clerk in the first instance, with recourse to the Chair if necessary.
12. Enquiries from the media will be dealt with in an efficient and timely manner.

13. Wherever possible, information given to the media should be in writing, so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

14. Press releases will be prepared and issued by the clerk in consultation with the Chair.

15. The council's publicity will be objective and balanced and will be designed not to affect public support for any particular political party.

16. If approached by the media, councillors should only comment if they are authorised to do so and they are confident about the issue raised and the council's policy or response to a particular activity, service or issue. It is important that quotes made on behalf of the council are factual and standards and ethics are maintained. The clerk should be informed of the approach.

17. If a councillor has not been authorised by the council to speak to the media, or is not confident on a particular issue, they may use the title of councillor but should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such.

18. It is the responsibility of the councillor concerned to redress any comments misconstrued as representing the views of the council.

URGENT SITUATIONS

19. In urgent situations where it is not possible to refer the media to the clerk or the Chair, councillors may represent the council but should ensure their statement reflects the council's position and opinion and should have particular regard to points 6 and 7 above.

OTHER PUBLICITY

20. The clerk will update notice boards and maintain the council's website, liaising with the Chair as appropriate to provide a useful means of informing residents of the council's services and activities. The clerk and nominated councillors will update the council's Facebook Page, Facebook Group and community WhatsApp group.

21. Posts to the Bredhurst Parish Council Facebook page to also be posted onto the Bredhurst Community Facebook group.

22. Rules added to the Bredhurst Community Facebook group (Kind and Courteous / No hate speech or bullying / No promotions or Spam).