

EFFINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

STATEMENTS OF GUIDANCE AND POLICY

9. Press and Media Protocols

The aim of these protocols is to provide clear and simple guidance for Councillors and Officers of Effingham Parish Council (EPC) as to how to handle Press and Media contacts and publicity, in order to maximise positive coverage for EPC.

From time to time the Press and Media will want to know EPC's view on specific matters (e.g. planning applications). When this happens, EPC needs to speak with one voice and have a consistent approach to the press and media so that the Council's view is approved and consistent.

The scope of these Press and Media Protocols includes the national and local press, the national and local media, social media (including but not limited to emails, Twitter, Facebook, blogs), publicity (e.g. newsletters) and correspondence.

These protocols are guidelines to Councillors and Officers when representing the views of the Parish Council. They do not infringe the right of elected or co-opted Councillors from communicating with the Press or Media, or creating publicity expressing their own opinions on matters.

GUIDELINES ON PRESS AND MEDIA

The Press and Media should be encouraged to approach the Chairman or Clerk in the first instance with any enquiries that relate to EPC, its processes, conduct, decisions or initiatives. This will enable the Council to keep accurate records of all contacts and responses issued.

PRESS RELEASES

All EPC press releases need the approval of the Parish Council, which may be delegated to the Chairman or Clerk (or Vice Chairman if the Chairman and Clerk are away) before being released.

RESPONDING TO COMMENTS IN THE PRESS AND MEDIA

EPC will consider responding to comments in the Press and Media or other publicity that refers to the Council. The final approval for all responses (letters or comments) resides with the Parish Council and may be delegated to the Chairman or Clerk. Records will be kept of all letters published.

MEDIA VISITS/INTERVIEWS/PRESS CONFERENCES

Conversations with reporters, photographic sessions, media interviews and press conferences should be organised through the Chairman or Clerk. All Press and Media requests for interviews should be made to the Clerk or Chairman and they will then coordinate the process.

PUBLICITY

Publicity and correspondence in the name of EPC must be approved by the Parish Council, or a delegated working group of the Parish Council, and checked by the Chairman or Clerk before being issued or delivered into the public arena.

MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

Copies of Agenda and Minutes for meetings of EPC or its Committees will be placed on EPC's web site. If requested, facilities should be provided at meetings for the Press and Media to take notes of the proceedings. As stated in EPC's Standing Orders, both the Press and public may be excluded from a meeting whilst certain confidential matters (as provided for in the relevant legislation) are under discussion.

GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

Take particularly care if the Press or Media approach you for comment on a topic, and do not be led into saying something you did not really mean to say. If unsure about any particular policy, simply state "no comment" and ask the Press to contact the Clerk.

Representing the Council

When speaking or providing written material to the Press and Media Councillors should make clear the capacity in which they are providing the information. For example: -

- as Chairman
- as Chair of a Committee

A copy of any written material sent to the Press and Media by a Councillor, representing the Council, shall be approved by the Parish Council and checked by the Clerk or Chairman before release.

Acting as Individuals

A Parish Councillor acting in an individual capacity shall make it clear that they are giving their personal views and are not representing the Parish Council view.

Note: A Parish Councillor talking or writing independently to the Press or communicating with the Media on a matter (e.g. a planning application), may be viewed as having "predetermination" and may be requested by the Chairman to refrain from taking part in any subsequent debate and vote on the matter.

Adopted by Effingham Parish Council at its meeting on 30.10.2018

Minute 336/18