



# SEAMER PARISH COUNCIL

[www.seamercrossgates.org.uk](http://www.seamercrossgates.org.uk)

## PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted by the Council on 8 August 2023

Next Review due 31 July 2024

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 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 services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.
- 1.2 Effective media relations are an important factor in maintaining a good relationship between the Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for the Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.
- 1.3 The community in this sense includes all residents and elected representatives, businesses, schools, shops, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.
- 1.4 This document sets out the framework for Councillors and Officers/Employees to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the Council's activities, the decisions it makes and the services it provides.

### 2. Media Opportunities

- 2.1 "The Media" is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience and includes:
  - (a) Broadcast Media (radio and Television)
  - (b) Internet (website and social media)
  - (c) Printed media (newspapers, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets, and the Council's Annual Report)
  - (d) Council Agendas and Displaying information on Council notice boards

### 3. Making contact with the media

- 3.1 The 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 consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- 3.2 All communications made by the 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, whether resolved within a meeting or under delegation.

- 3.3 Where such questions are put to the Clerk, he/she 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 and Vice-Chairman on a suitable response, which may in fact be “no comment”.

#### **4. Councillors dealing with the media and issues to be aware of**

- 4.1 Nothing in these policy 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 Council.
- (a) Never use the prefixes “Councillor” or “Cllr” when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating Council policy. It is your responsibility as a Councillor to make it clear that it is your own personal opinion.
  - (b) Councillors should take great care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Council’s Code of Conduct.
  - (c) All Councillors should be particularly cautious if using social media sites so that they do not respond in haste and repent at leisure.
  - (d) A Councillor 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 following the exclusion of the public) on the Council’s or Committees’ agenda or at any other private briefing.
  - (e) Take particular care if the press or media approach you for comment on a controversial subject, and do not be led into stating something you did not really mean to say. If unsure, simply state “no comment” and ask the press to contact the Clerk.
  - (f) Councillors also 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.
  - (g) A Councillor should never raise matters or make comments on subjects relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer/Employee at meetings held in public or to the media.
- 4.2 The Council chooses not to engage in Party Politics and individual Councillors should apply Council policies not Party-Political opinions.

#### **5. Talking to the Media in your role as a Councillor**

- 5.1 in response to a Seamer Parish Council press/media release:
- (a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Clerk.

- (b) No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion with the Clerk, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)
  - (c) Any press/media interview should be undertaken by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman by prior arrangement by the Clerk, consistent with the relevant press/media release and the policies and other resolutions of the Council, whether resolved within a meeting or under delegation.
- 5.2 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:
- (a) The views of the Council may be expressed subject to the policy guidelines above.
  - (b) The Clerk should be informed so that s/he is fully appraised of the communication that has taken place.

## **6. Monitoring**

- 6.1 It is important to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, and letters) about the Council in order to know:
- (a) Whether press releases and statements issued by the Parish Council are picked up and used effectively.
  - (b) What the community is saying about the Parish Council?

Councillors and Officers / Employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Council in all Media and to inform the Clerk. Wherever possible supply original press cuttings rather than photocopies to the Clerk.

Signed:                      Chairman of the Council

Clerk of the Council and Responsible Financial Officer

Proper Officer

Date:    29 August 2023