



## **Press & Media Policy**

Adopted: \_\_27 July 2026\_\_

Next Review: \_\_May 2027\_\_

### **1. Purpose of the Policy**

This policy sets out how Winterborne St Martin Parish Council (“the Council”) will engage with the press and media. Its purpose is to ensure that all communication is lawful, accurate, consistent, and reflects the decisions and position of the Council.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All councillors
- The Parish Clerk
- Any employee or contractor authorised to communicate on behalf of the Council
- All forms of media, including newspapers, radio, television, online news outlets, social media, and the Council website

### **3. Principles of Communication**

The Council will ensure that all communication with the press and media is:

- Open and transparent, unless information is confidential
- Accurate and factual, reflecting agreed Council decisions
- Lawful, complying with the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and the Code of Conduct
- Respectful, avoiding personal comments or criticism
- Consistent, with clear lines of responsibility for who may speak on behalf of the Council

### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **4.1 The Parish Clerk**

The Clerk is the Council’s official point of contact for all press and media enquiries.

The Clerk will:

- Respond to media enquiries on behalf of the Council

- Issue official Council statements
- Publish approved information on the Council website
- Ensure compliance with data protection and confidentiality requirements
- Refer sensitive matters to the Chair or Council as appropriate

#### 4.2 The Chair

The Chair may speak to the press on behalf of the Council only to represent the agreed position of the Council, not personal views.

The Chair may also approve urgent statements where delay would disadvantage the Council.

#### 4.3 Councillors

Councillors may:

- Communicate with the media in a personal capacity, provided they make clear they are not speaking for the Council
- Not disclose confidential information
- Not represent personal views as Council policy
- Councillors should refer all official enquiries to the Clerk

Councillors must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times.

### 5. Official Council Statements

Official statements will be issued only by:

- The Parish Clerk
- The Chair (where appropriate)

Statements must reflect formally agreed Council decisions and must not include personal opinions.

### 6. Media Attendance at Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the press and public unless lawfully excluded under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

The press may:

- Attend and report on meetings
- Film, photograph, or record proceedings (unless this disrupts the meeting)

Where the Council resolves to exclude the press and public, no reporting or recording may take place.

### 7. Confidential and Exempt Information

The Council will not disclose:

- Personal data
- Information relating to employees
- Legally sensitive matters
- Commercially confidential information
- Any item considered under a confidential agenda

Councillors and staff must not discuss confidential matters with the media.

## **8. Social Media**

The Council may operate official social media accounts managed by the Clerk.

Councillors may use personal social media accounts but must:

- Not present personal views as Council policy
- Not disclose confidential information
- Not engage in arguments or debates on behalf of the Council
- Refer official matters to the Clerk

## **9. Press Releases**

Press releases will:

- Be drafted by the Clerk
- Be factual, brief, and non-political
- Reflect agreed Council decisions
- Be approved by the Chair before publication

## **10. Election Periods (Purdah)**

During election periods, the Council will comply with statutory guidance and will:

- Avoid proactive publicity that could influence public opinion
- Restrict communications to factual service information
- Not publish material that could be seen as supporting a candidate or political party

## **11. Complaints and Corrections**

Where inaccurate media reporting occurs, the Clerk will:

- Seek correction from the media outlet
- Issue a clarifying statement if necessary
- Report serious issues to the Council

## **12. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or Council practice.

