

STISTED PARISH COUNCIL

Press and Media Policy



Date of Adoption: November 2024

Last review date: May 2025

Next Review Date: May 2026

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with any day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. This policy gives guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

2. Key Aims

The Council is accountable to parishioners for its actions, and this relies on good two-way communications. This includes the media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities. This does include our Parish Council website which is publicly available on the internet

3. The Legal Framework

The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988, The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency Code 2015, as a minimum. The Council must also have regard to the governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

4. Contact with the Media

- The Clerk, Councillors and Council Volunteers should always consider the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers, and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media.
- When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken before any response is made.
- When responding to approaches from the media, the Clerk and Chairman are authorised to make contact with the media. In specific cases the Clerk and/or Chairman may authorise other Member/s to respond to media requests.
- Statements made by the Chairman and the Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion.
- There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

- Should a member decide to submit a letter to the press on any subject they should not use the term 'Parish Councillor' or give the impression, directly or implied, that they are writing on behalf of the Council.

5. Attendance of Media at Council Meetings

- The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports, and minutes be sent to the media on request.
- The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating is available in the meeting room.

6. Press Releases

The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

All Parish Council press releases should be issued by the Clerk on behalf of Stisted Parish Council