

ACKWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. OBJECTIVE

This policy aims to establish a protocol for effective communication and dissemination of information to the press and members of the public. Ackworth Parish Council aims to be open and accessible to the media at all times.

2. PURPOSE

The Council uses external communication with the media for a number of reasons:

- To broaden and strengthen local democracy through a well-informed public;
- To raise awareness of the Council's policies, services and functions;
- To raise awareness of community events in the locality;
- 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 initiatives 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. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Media releases will report decisions and outcomes of the Council's activities and explain the reasons for them;
- They will not report on political debates within the Council;
- They will not be used to comment on national political debates unless of specific relevance to this Parish Council;
- The Clerk will be the first point of contact for the media;
- Individual members will not be authorised to issue press releases on behalf of the Council;
- In the restricted period before an election, commonly known as 'purdah' media releases will not include quotes from Members who are due for re-election.

4. PARISH COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

- The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Council should be addressed;
- All official correspondence should be sent via the Clerk on official letter headed paper;
- Where correspondence is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to another person;
- Copies of correspondence to the District Council should also be copied to the ward members for that area.

5. COMMUNICATIONS WITH PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Clerk will clear all press releases or comments to the media regarding policy in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and/ or Chairman of the relevant Committee.

Press reports from the Council shall in general be sent from the Clerk or by the reporter's attendance at a meeting.

In addition to the Clerk, the Chairman shall be authorised to speak to the press regarding Council matters.

The Clerk is authorised to speak to the press regarding events in order to promote and advertise.

Unless a Councillor had been authorised by the Council to speak to the media or public on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press or public should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.

6. OTHER PUBLICITY

The Council will use its website, notice board, newsletter, leaflets and social media to promote the work of the Council. The content of such publicity will be at the discretion of the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and/or Committee Chairman if appropriate.