

Social Media Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Settle Town Council (the Council) is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decisions and actions. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with those who gather information for editorial publication in print, broadcast and electronic form (i.e., journalists, reporters, photographers, researchers, editors of newspapers and magazines, crew of TV and radio programmes and the like (“the media”)).

1.2 Where information is not available via the Council’s Publication Scheme the council shall endeavour to assist the media with enquiries about the Council’s functions, decisions and actions. The Council may require the media to produce a valid UK press card or other identification.

2. KEY AIMS

2.1 The media – press, radio, TV, internet, web format and social media – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with the media to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and when necessary to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

2.2 The Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts.

3. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 This policy is subject to the Council’s statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the Publicity Code). Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Councils Standing Orders.

3.2 The Council, its councillors and staff cannot disclose information that is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

4. CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

4.1 The media shall contact the Council’s Clerk if it wishes to;

- i) Interview councillors or staff about the Council’s decisions or actions
- ii) Request a written or verbal statement from the Council about its decisions or actions

If the clerk or assistant clerk is unavailable the media should contact the chairman of the Council or relevant committee chairs.

4.2 Any verbal or written statement from the clerk or councillors in their official capacity to the media must represent the corporate position and views of the Council, not the individual or views of the clerk or councillor. No view expressed shall misrepresent the corporate position of the council.

4.3 Prior written consent of the Council is required if any interview by the media with councillors, the clerk or staff in their official capacity about the Council's business, decisions and actions is to take place.

4.4 Prior written consent of the Council is required before any councillor or staff in their official capacity (other than the clerk) would like to write articles or press release for publications on the Council's business, decisions and actions.

4.5 The clerk may contact the media if the Council would like to give an interview, provide a written or verbal statement or publish an article via the media about its business, decisions and actions.

4.6 Any letters or statements to the media from the Council to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents should be prepared and submitted for publication by the clerk. Such correspondence should be kept brief and balanced in tone and should not be drawn out over a protracted period of time.

4.7 The clerk and members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with 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 from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.

5. ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

5.1 The Press and Media are permitted to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees unless legislation suggests otherwise. Recording and reporting on meetings is subject to Council's Broadcasting, Recording and Filming Policy. Roles & Responsibilities.

5.2 Agendas, reports and minutes will be sent to the media on request. Postage or other necessary charges may apply.

5.3 The media are requested to notify the clerk if they intend to undertake filming or taping of Council proceedings (see policy on Recording of Public Meetings).

6. PRESS RELEASE

6.1 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 members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial to the Council or the community.

6.2 The clerk or any member may draft a press release, however all press releases must be issued by the clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council publications and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA

7.1 The Council will use all aspects of social media to promote, defend and enhance the role of Settle Town Council but will use the Council web site and Council Facebook site as the principal methods of social media communication.

7.2 Councillors are actively encouraged to engage with social media and if requiring a message on the Council website or Facebook an e mail to the clerk will see it is posted.

But if councillors use other social media sites there are some things to bear in mind:

- *Never use the prefix "Councillor" when writing to the press as an individual or refer to your position on the Council. This implies you are stating Council policy. A copy of any written material sent to the Press and Media by a Councillor, as representing the Council, must be forwarded to the Clerk.*
- *Councillors can make their own statements expressing their personal opinion relating to local issues. However, Councillors must make it clear that any opinion expressed is their own personal view, not that of the Council and should be recorded as such.*

8. ROLE OF THE CLERK

The Clerk will act as the press officer and point of contact for Settle Town Council and will act as administrator for the Council Web Site and Settle Town Council Facebook Site.

Signed

Chairman

Dated