

# ORWELL PARISH COUNCIL

## Press and Media Policy

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### Introduction

Orwell Parish Council's interaction with the community is vital to its working and the decisions it takes. Effective two-way communication is important in realising this.

### Purpose of the policy

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

This policy is not intended to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations, but to provide guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

### Application of policy

The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988, and the Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The Council must also have regard to the governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

1. Media refers to many different means of communicating information to a wide audience and whilst not exhaustive includes the following: Radio; Television; Internet; Newspapers; Magazines; Leaflets; and Posters.
2. If a Councillor is approached or receives an enquiry from the media about ANY matter relating to the Parish Council they must be referred as speedily as practicable to the Chair and the Clerk. Where this is a matter where no Council Policy has yet been made the matter should be considered by the full council at the next scheduled meeting or, if of sufficient importance, at any extraordinary meeting; before a formal reply is given.

3. The Council should make every effort to respond promptly to request for information. Enquiries or requests can only be responded to by the Clerk, after consultation with and authorisation by the Chair and or Vice Chair if an appropriate Council Policy exists, or after discussion with the full council if a Policy or position needs to be agreed. Wherever possible the Clerk will prepare all written Press Releases or Statement and copies must be retained. The format and content must be prepared in association with agreed with the Chair and/or Vice Chair and other members should they be required.
4. The disclosure and sharing of information should normally be restricted to matters that have been discussed as an Agenda Item by the Parish Council with the exception of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. In the case of such a request the Clerk should prepare a suggested course of action so that the Council complies fully with the Requirements of the Act. There is the obligation to act with integrity and respect for Council Policy once made. No information of a confidential nature may be disclosed. No matter relating to the conduct or capability of a Councillor at a Meeting can be disclosed.
5. No employee (other than the Clerk) or Councillor should contact the media on any matter related to the Parish Council unless specifically authorised by the Chair, (or in his/her absence), the Vice Chairman. 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 and that the use of the press release can be monitored. However, nothing is contained in these guidelines that seeks to prevent any individual from expressing a personal opinion for example by writing to a newspaper or posing an item on the internet. Where personal views expressed differ from council policy this must be made clear. Care must be taken not to misrepresent and or bring the Parish Council into disrepute or undermine any decision made and must take account of the role and responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.
6. When in attendance at any public meeting as a representative of Orwell Parish Council an individual is required to act with integrity at all times and ensure that any comments they make are entirely accurate and reflect the views of the council as a whole or, if not, that this is made known.

Date of policy: August 2020

Date of Parish Council meeting approving policy:

Policy version reference: 1.3.26

Supersedes: Orwell Parish council Press and Media Policy 2019

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Nigel Szembel, Parish Council Chair