



SARRATT PARISH COUNCIL

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: DEALING WITH THE PRESS AND MEDIA

1. This policy is to guide both Councillors and Officers of the Council in their relations with the news media in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of the Council.
2. Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its Councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.
3. This policy does not seek to be comprehensive but sets out to provide guidance on how to deal with some issues that may arise when dealing with news media organisations including press officers attending meetings.
4. The Council is accountable to the electorate for its actions and shall therefore be proactive in making all reasonable efforts to make its decisions and policies known to the electorate.
5. The Council shall allow all reasonable access to news media organisations.
6. The Council shall make every effort to respond without delay to requests for information from news media organisations.
7. Councillors and officers must NOT disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with news media organisations of any item which has been discussed under confidential items on the Council's agenda.
8. Councillors and officers should act with integrity at all times when representing or acting on behalf of the Sarratt Parish Council.
9. When dealing with news media organisations Councillors and officers should be informed and certain of all their facts; ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Parish Council they are aware what Council policy is and their comments reflect that policy; be calm; ensure that their comments and views will not bring the Council into disrepute.

10. Councillors should be aware that case law states that the role of Councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful about expressing individual views to the news media, whether or not they relate to matters of Council business. Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council decisions and policies once made or adopted. While it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make clear that he or she disagreed with a decision or policy and voted against it (if this took place in an open session), they should not seek to undermine a decision or policy through the news media.
11. Councillors and officers not used to dealing with the press should be encouraged to write out a statement or position on the issue beforehand, and if necessary ask for it to be checked by a more experienced Councillor to avoid for example, statements made in all innocence looking very different in print than they did when they were spoken.
12. A Councillor should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer or other Councillor at meetings held in public or before the press.
13. All news releases and enquiries made on behalf of the Parish Council will be authorised by the Parish Clerk after consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council and are therefore **NEVER** answered immediately.

Reviewed and adopted: 9 January 2024