

Media Policy

Utilising the media is one avenue in which the Council can advise the community or stakeholders about relevant issues. However, it is important to use this avenue wisely to ensure the message is consistent.

This policy/procedure details how Councillors and staff are required to respond to media enquiries or comments. By conducting all media liaison via a central point of contact, the Town Council will be able to oversee media issues. Also, by limiting the number of official spokespeople, the Council has a better opportunity to provide a consistent message.

This policy applies to all forms of media, including print, broadcast, online platforms, and social media.

Aims and Principles

Crewkerne Town Council aims to build and maintain a positive reputation and will have a proactive approach to dealing with the media with enquiries being dealt with, wherever possible, within two working days, where the nature and complexity of the enquiry allows.

This approach will ensure an open and transparent approach.

Policy Objectives

- To improve residents' understanding of the work of the Council and to provide public information.
- To enhance the reputation of Crewkerne Town Council by promoting and celebrating success and the achievements of the Council and its partners.
- To ensure a co-ordinated response from a single point of communication, the Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk in their absence).
- Reduce the risk of reputational harm arising from lack of response or inaccurate information.
- To ensure the Council is able to respond accurately to public comment and correct misinformation where necessary.
- To have regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

Spokespersons and Communication Hierarchy

- All media enquiries must be directed to the Town Clerk in the first instance.
- In the absence of the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk will act as the designated contact point.
- The Mayor may act as the official spokespersons for matters relating to Full Council where appropriate.
- Committee Chairs may only comment where specifically authorised by Full Council or the Town Clerk.

Responding to Media Enquiries:

Crewkerne Town Council is often contacted by various media outlets for information or comments on a wide range of issues.

When an enquiry is made by any media outlet, it is to be directed to the Clerk who will undertake any research necessary to assist her/him to make an informed, considered and timely response. If a Chairman of a Committee is contacted, only the decision of the corporate body should be conveyed.

In instances where the nature of the media enquiry is deemed by the Town Clerk to be of a technical nature and/or of low risk (e.g. routine factual information already in the public domain), authorised officers may respond. All other enquiries must be escalated to the Clerk.

All media enquiries must be considered in relation to:

- GDPR and Data Protection legislation
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Confidentiality requirements
- Relevant Council policies

The Council takes the protection of personal data seriously and is committed to protecting this information in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation, as detailed in the Council's Data Protection policy.

The Council will not disclose personal data or sensitive data unless there is a lawful basis or consent to do so.

Equal opportunities and diversity must be respected at all times. The Town Council will not publish or support material which in whole, or in part, appears to promote a political party.

Making Private Statements

It is important for Councillors and staff to distinguish between instances where they are speaking in an official or private capacity.

Enquiries where a staff member is asked to give an opinion or statement of a political and/or policy nature must be referred to the Clerk.

Councillors and staff may give personal views in a private capacity; however they must clearly state that such views are personal and not representative of the Council.

Councillors and staff should not disclose any information that is not already in the public domain.

The Town Clerk should be informed of any radio, ~~or~~ television or social media interviews, statements, or public commentary given in a Council-related context.

Record Keeping and Accountability

- All formal media responses should be recorded and retained in accordance with the Council's document retention policy.
- Where appropriate, press statements should be shared internally prior to release to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Supporting Documents:

- Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
- Crewkerne Town Council's Social Media Policy
- Crewkerne Town Council's Recording of Meetings Policy

Version Control:

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This policy will be reviewed every four years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or council practice.

Review Date: **June 2030**