



Press and Media Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within Scarning Parish Council for working with the press/media.

2 Key Aims

2.1 Scarning Parish Council is accountable to the local community for its actions. The media – press, radio, TV, internet –allows the Council to increase public awareness of its services and facilities, and to explain the reasons for particular policies, actions and priorities.

3 Implementation

3.1 This policy is subject to the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Local Government Act 1972, the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Council's Standing Orders. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

4 Council Press Releases

The purpose of a press release is to make the Press/media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information, or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. Press releases will normally be drafted by the Clerk and approved by the Council's Chair and Vice Chair. A draft copy of a press release will be sent to all councillors for comment.

5 Press/Media Attendance at Council Meetings

5.1 Meetings of the Council and its committees are open to members of the Press unless the Council resolves that their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

5.2 Under its Standing Order 1 (k) the Council resolves that the Press 'shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.' The recording and reporting of meetings is subject to the Council's separate policy on Public Participation.

5.3 Members of the Press are entitled to speak and ask questions in the Council's Public Participation period. In response, the Council will act in accordance with its Standing Orders and will not be required to give a response at the meeting.

6 Procedure for Communication with the Press/media

6.1 Reporters should be directed to contact the Clerk if they wish to carry out an interview or obtain a statement about the Council's business and actions. Except in the most straightforward cases, the enquirer should be informed that a statement will be made within 24 hours and they should be asked to set out clearly what they want to know. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair, will determine the Council's response.

6.2 The Clerk will draft a response and discuss any statement, quotation or information to be provided with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council. Statements will then be issued on behalf of the Parish Council.

6.3 If an issue concerns the Council's Chair, or Vice Chair, the Clerk is authorised to liaise with the Council's Social Media Officer, or other nominated officer/s, before issuing a statement.

6.4 If the Press/media wishes to discuss an issue that is, or likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.

6.5 Any verbal or written statement given by the Clerk must represent the corporate position and views of the Council, in line with past decisions and approved policies, and not the individual views of the Council Chair, Vice Chair, or councillors.

6.6 The Parish Council acknowledges the right of the press and media to obtain information under the Freedom of Information Act and will cooperate with requests for information in line with its published Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme.

7 URGENT MATTERS

7.1 In the case of an urgent letter or press release being required in advance of a Council meeting, this may be issued by the Parish Clerk with the agreement of the Council Chair and Vice Chair, following circulation of a draft version to other councillors for comment.

8 Procedure for Councillors

8.1 In the event that individual councillors are contacted direct by the press or media they should consider the wider implications of the information being requested; in what capacity the information is being provided; and for what purpose.

8.2 Councillors must act in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct at all times when dealing with the press and media.

8.3 A direct quotation may be given as long as it is made clear that the view expressed is a personal one and has not been given on behalf of the Parish Council.

9 Privacy

9.1 The Clerk and councillors must be mindful at all times not to release personal information about members such as home addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers.

Approved: May 2025.

Next review: February 2026.