

Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council

# News Releases & Media Policy



## **NEWS RELEASES AND MEDIA POLICY**

Bramshott & Liphook Parish Council (“the Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decisions and actions.

The Council recognises that effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Council and the community. “The Media” includes organisations and individuals such as the press, radio, TV, internet including social media sites. This policy sets out the framework for the Council to follow when in contact with the media, to inform the public about its activities, decisions and the services it provides.

This policy encompasses many different means of communication including news releases, website, social media and any printed material that the Council publishes.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the views and policies of the Council are presented accurately; to clarify who is authorised to speak on behalf of the Council; to provide guidance to officers and councillors on how to deal with practical issues when dealing with the press and media; and to ensure consistency in the Council’s dealing with the press and media.

### **Media Attendance at Meetings**

Members of the press are encouraged to attend meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees and in accordance with Council Standing Orders meetings are open to the public and the press unless the Council resolves that their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business being transacted or for other special reasons in accordance with Council Standing Orders.

Persons may be required to leave a meeting if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

### **Filming and Recording of Meetings**

Any member of the public or press may take photographs, film and audio record proceedings of all public meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees.

Whilst no permission is needed, members of the public must be made aware that the meeting is to be filmed or recorded. It is also advisable that any person wishing to film or record a meeting lets the Clerk of the meeting know so that all necessary arrangements can be put in place. The Council will endeavour to provide a space to view and hear the meeting.

Any filming or recording of the public should not include children under 18, the vulnerable or other members of the public who object to being filmed, without undermining the broader transparency of the meeting.

Any person filming or recording a meeting that disrupts the conduct of the meeting or impedes other members of the public from seeing, hearing or filming/recording proceedings, may be asked to leave the meeting.

If the meeting enters an exempt session where members of the public and the press are excluded due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted, the filming or recording of the meeting must be stopped.

### **Responsibilities of the Executive Officer**

Wherever possible all communications with the Press and Media should be made through the Executive Officer or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer is authorised to receive all communications from the Press and Media and to issue News statements on behalf of the Council in consultation with the Chair of the Council.

Communications made by the Executive Officer will relate to the stated business and day to day management of the activities of adopted policies of the Council. He/she should not speculate on matters that have not been considered by the Council. Where such questions are put to the Executive Officer, he/she should inform the inquirer that they will be notified of a response within 3 working days or sooner if possible. The Executive Officer should then consult with the Chair of the Council or relevant Councillor on a suitable response and which may in fact be 'no comment'.

### **Councillors**

Whilst it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make clear that he/she voted against a decision in an open public session of a meeting, Councillors should not seek to undermine a decision through the press or other media.

### **News Releases**

News releases may be issued proactively to alert residents and other stakeholders, via the print, broadcast and social media, to a potential story, provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular matter.

News releases made on behalf of the Council will be issued by the Executive Officer or, in his/her absence, by the Deputy Executive Officer. If news releases are drafted by any other Councillor they must be issued by the Executive Officer or, in his/her absence, by the Deputy Executive Officer.

Unexpected approaches by the press and media may lead to unguarded comments being made and great care must therefore be taken to avoid misrepresentation of the Council's policy or its position on the matter in question.

Reporters should be directed to the Executive Officer (or Deputy Executive Officer) if they want to obtain a statement. They should be asked to set out clearly what they want to know and informed that a response will be given within 3 working days which may be 'no comment'. Where the matter has not been discussed by the Council the reporter should be made aware that an immediate response may not be given until such time as a corporate view has been agreed.

Any verbal or written statement given by the Executive Officer (or Deputy Executive Officer) must represent the corporate view of the Council and not the individual views of councillors or staff.

### **General Principles for Councillors and Staff**

- Ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Council that you are aware what the Council policy is on that particular matter
- Ensure that your comments will not bring the Council nor any of its Councillors or staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous or slanderous
- Publicity concerning controversial issues where there are arguments for and against should be handled with particular care
- Publicity should not attack or undermine generally accepted moral standards
- Public funds must not be used to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose it is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy
- Council resources must not be used on publicity that is party political or on publicity which could be seen as promoting an individual councillor, particularly at election times
- No councillor or member of staff should disclose any information to the press and media which is confidential or where disclosure of information is prohibited by law. This particularly relates to items discussed in an exempt session of a Council meeting
- No councillor or member of staff should damage the reputation of the Council or another Councillor or member of staff
- A Councillor should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of a member of staff at meetings held in public or before the press or media

### **Social Media**

Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council uses the following social media platforms at this time:

- Parish Council website
- Facebook

The Parish Council website will remain the main medium for the purpose of communicating statutory information about the Parish Council. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication.

In their use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor, Liphook Talkback etc), councillors and staff must always observe the principles stated in this policy.