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Boroughbridge Town Council

MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

Boroughbridge Town Council's relationship with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.

Effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Town Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for the Town Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.

This document sets out the framework for Town Council Members and employees to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the Town Council's activities, the decisions it takes and the services it provides.

The Media

The term 'media' encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wider audience, and includes broadcast media, the Internet, and a wide range of printed media, including local newspapers, magazines, local broadcasters and posters.

The general principle is that the Town Council Office will act as the Press Office. Any official contact with the media concerning the Town Council's policies, decisions and services is to be initiated through this office.

Press releases and statements will be prepared by the clerk in consultation with the chair and other members as required and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Town Council.

Members who are approached by the media should refer to the Council Office to ensure consistency. Members can, as long as they make it clear that it is a personal opinion, state their view on a matter. However, members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Town Council into disrepute, and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct. The requirement of the Data Protection Act 1998 must be adhered to at all times.

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request and the media are encouraged to attend council meetings and the council should make appropriate space available. The Openness of LG Bodies Regulation 2014 became law on 6 August 2014, allowing filming, photography and/or recording of council proceedings by the public or press. The chairman of the meeting should ask if any person intends to do any of these so that councillors are aware. This should be a constant agenda item on all council or committee meetings. No oral report or running verbal commentary is permitted during the meeting.

Notice Boards and Website

Public notice is required of Town Council meetings and its committee meetings. The LGA1972 requires that at least 3 clear working days' notice be given and that the notice must be fixed in some conspicuous place in the locality (notice boards)

The Town Council's website should be updated regularly by the council office with copies of minutes, agendas and policies, information useful to residents and information that is required by law.

Social Media and Networking

Social media is a collective term for ways to create and publish on the Internet and other forms of social communication such as Facebook or Twitter. It is clear the social networking sites can enhance debate and add positively to local issues when used correctly.

Boroughbridge Town Council at present does not use either Twitter or Facebook, but if the council decides to, it is to be a service advertised to members of the public. Most of the activity will be 'following' to gather information and to re-post items of information to residents of Boroughbridge. It is expected that this will develop over time.

Use of Social Media by Councillors

When using social media councillors should not represent their personal views as being the view or the policies of the council, nor should they represent their views as

being those of other councillors unless those councillors' have given their express permission.

Councillors should refrain from personal criticism in social media of other councillors and individuals or organisations with whom the Town Council has dealings (in accordance with the Nolan principles of conduct in public life)