

# **HOLBROOK PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MEDIA POLICY**

### **Introduction**

1. Holbrook Parish Council is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, please contact the Council's clerk or, in their absence, the Chairman.
2. The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for editorial publication in print, broadcast and electronic form (e.g., researchers, journalists, reporters, photographers, editors of newspapers and magazines, camera or sound operators and crew of TV and radio programmes).
3. Where information is not available via the Council's publication scheme the Council shall endeavour to assist the media with enquiries about the Council's functions, decisions and actions.
4. This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

### **Legal requirements and restrictions**

5. This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's standing orders and financial regulations. The Council's financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.
6. The Council, its councillors and staff cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

### **Meetings**

7. The meetings of the Council and its committees are open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

8. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders and public participation protocol.
9. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 10 and 11 below apply.
10. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.
11. Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.
12. As a courtesy to the public, and to assist anyone planning to film etc., the Parish Council asks that anyone wishing to film etc, contact the Council, in advance of the meeting to enable the Clerk to discuss and assist with any specific requirements.
13. There is no actual requirement to notify the Council in advance, but it should be noted that the Chairman of the meeting will have absolute discretion to terminate or suspend any of these activities if, in their opinion, continuing to do so would prejudice proceedings at the meeting.
14. It is expected that those who are recording proceedings will not edit the film/recordings/photographs in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being photographed/filmed/recorded.
15. In advance of meetings of the Council, its committees, sub-committees and joint committees, newspapers, news agencies or organisations that collect news for sound and TV broadcast are entitled, on payment of postage or other necessary charges, to hard copies of the agenda and necessary supporting papers. The accredited representatives of the newspapers, news agencies or organisations that collect news for sound and TV broadcast shall be given reasonable facilities for taking their report of a meeting. This is confirmed in the Council's Standing Orders.

#### **Other communications with the media**

16. This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.

17. No individual Councillor or staff, in their official capacity, is empowered to provide a verbal or written statement to the media unless the Council has delegated the authority to them so to do. All requests for comments shall be directed to the Clerk or the Chairman.
18. The media shall in the first instance contact the Council's Clerk if they want to i) interview councillors about its business decisions and action or ii) obtain a verbal or written statement from the Council about its business decisions and actions. If the Clerk is not available, the media shall contact the Council's Chairman. Any verbal or written statement given by the Council's Clerk to the media represents the corporate position and views of the Council.
19. An interview by the media with councillors or staff in their official capacity about the Council's business, decisions and actions requires the Council's written consent. In any such interview, the media cannot ask about the personal views of the councillors or staff in their private capacity. Councillors cannot communicate their personal views about the Council's business, decisions and actions, other than the views they hold in their official capacity. Councillors and staff are not permitted to misrepresent the corporate position and views of the Council, or to damage the reputation of others in the Council or the Council itself.
20. The Council's Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to give an interview, provide a verbal or written statement to the media or publish an article using the media about its business, decisions and actions.
21. Councillors and staff, other than the Clerk, cannot in their official capacity, provide verbal and written statements to the media, or write articles for publication using the media about the Council's business decisions and actions without the Council's prior written consent. Councillors and staff cannot communicate their personal views about the Council's business decisions and actions, other than the views they hold in their official capacity. Councillors and staff are not permitted to misrepresent the corporate position and views of the Council, or to damage the reputation of others in the Council or the Council itself.
22. If Councillors or staff, in their private capacity, provide verbal or written statements or interviews to the media or write articles for publication using the media about the Council's business decisions and actions, any personal views must be expressed in their private capacity. Personal views held in their official capacity cannot be communicated. Councillors are not permitted to use their title 'Councillor' and staff are not permitted to use their job title.

**Website:**

23. Councillors or staff must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the Council's official business or reputation, even indirectly.
24. Councillors or staff must not use social media or websites to defame or disparage the Council or its staff or any third party; to harass or unlawfully discriminate against

Councillors or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate Councillors or third parties.

25. Councillors or staff must not express opinions on the Council's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by the Council or its Proper Officer. You may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation.
26. In establishing a website, the Council must ensure that users can find the website; that users are clear as to who owns the website and what it is designed to achieve.
27. The Council must ensure that contact points (whether email, forms-based or telephone) must be staffed and enquiries answered within reasonable timescales.
28. The Council must ensure that links are up to date so users can rely on the website being available.
29. If Councillors are blogging or tweeting personally, and not in the role as a Councillor, they must ensure that they do not act, claim to act, or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Parish Council. Whilst Councillors may use a blog to draw attention to a particular local issue and call the council to account, as you would in a public meeting, blog entries ridiculing or attacking officers, or making serious accusations about their personal competence or integrity could amount to disrespect, even bullying, in some circumstances.

**Disclaimers:**

30. The website will carry a disclaimer. This may protect the Parish Council from legal action arising out of the material on the site, or even the material that links to elsewhere. It needs to be accessible from every screen in the site, for example, the disclaimer notice on the website will be accessible from the footer menu on every screen.