



RYDE TOWN COUNCIL

MEDIA AND PRESS PROTOCOL

Approved 03122018

1. Purpose

- (a) Ryde Town Council (“the Town Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information to the media about its governance, decisions and activities. The purpose of this Protocol is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and staff in the provision of this information to the media and to provide guidance on how to promote positively the Town Council’s activities.
- (b) This Protocol is subject to the Town 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, the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Town Council is also obliged to comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011, a copy of which can be found on the Council’s website.
- (c) In following this Protocol councillors, employees, and volunteers should also be aware of the following:
 - (i) The requirement to ensure that verbal or written information does not disclose confidential or sensitive information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law.
 - (ii) The contents of the Town Council’s Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy
 - (iii) Councillors should be aware of the standards expected as part of their role, which are outlined in the Council’s Code of Conduct.
 - (iv) Employees should not express personal opinions in response to media enquiries.
 - (v) The implications of defamation and libel laws – more advice on these should be sought from the Town Council’s solicitor if required.
 - (vi) To avoid publishing anything that could cause any safeguarding issues. Information on safeguarding can be sought from Network Ryde, the Town Council’s youth service.
- (d) The Town Council is aware of the positive benefits of proactively promoting the successes and achievements of the Town Council. Press releases are one mechanism that can be used to promote the Town Council’s activities, but this can also be undertaken through proactive use of the Town Council’s newsletter, website, social media, and posters.
- (e) Guidance for dealing with the Media during any pre-election period (sometimes known as ‘purdah’) will be provided by the Isle of Wight Council.

2. Dealing with Enquiries from the Media

- (a) There is a large range of local media outlets on the Isle of Wight including print, radio, online, and social media. On rare occasions there may also be enquiries from regional and national media. Contact details for each media outlet will be held by the Town Clerks and the Office Manager. Should there be any doubt about whether a media outlet is genuine the Town Clerks should be contacted for advice.
- (b) The Town Clerks will co-ordinate all genuine media enquiries received by the Town Council and will liaise with either the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, or Committee Chairman or Vice Chairman as appropriate regarding a response. Any councillor who is contacted directly by the media and asked to make a comment on behalf of the Town Council, rather than in their capacity as an individual councillor, should pass the media enquiry to the Town Clerks in the first instance.
- (c) Neither the Town Clerks, acting on behalf of the Town Council, nor Councillors should provide comments to the media in response to leaks or allegations or stories about individual employees and Councillors.
- (d) If a journalist/reporter/writer enquires about what was said by individual Councillors during a meeting he or she will be referred by the Town Clerks to the Councillor(s) direct. If he or she requires clarification of proceeding at a meeting, their enquiry should be referred to the Town Clerks.
- (e) Councillors or employees or volunteers receiving enquiries from the media regarding legal proceedings or contract matters must seek advice from the Town Clerks who will determine how to move forward in consultation with the Mayor. This may involve seeking legal advice from the Council's solicitor.
- (f) Press releases issued by partner organisations about joint ventures with the Town Council should not be issued by the partner organisation without the consent of the Town Council. This consent will need to be obtained from the Town Clerks who may consult with the Mayor/relevant Committee Chairman. The press release should include the Town Council logo and a quote from the Town Council as appropriate.

3. Official Town Council Press Releases

- (a) Official Town Council press releases and statements will be prepared by the Town Clerks and/or relevant Chairman in consultation with other Councillors as required. They will be factual, politically neutral, and may include a quote from the relevant Councillor(s), such the Mayor or relevant Committee Chairman.
- (b) If an official press release mentions an organisation other than the Town Council then that organisation must be made aware of the contents of the press release no later than the time of its embargo.

- (c) Councillors who identify an opportunity to issue a press release in accordance with paragraph 1(d) above should discuss this with the Clerks who will, in consultation with other Councillors as appropriate, decide how to proceed. The benefits to the Town Council of positive publicity are referred to above and cannot be overstated.
- (d) Official press releases will not promote the views of specific political parties.
- (e) All official press releases will be placed on the Town Council's website and promoted on the Town Council's Social Media.

4. Councillor Press Releases

- (a) It is the prerogative of individual Councillors to make their own statements relating to local issues. Councillors must, however, always make it clear that any views they express either through the media or other methods of communication, whether or not different from Town Council policy and/or discussion, are their own personal views and not those of the Town Council. This may be achieved by including a disclaimer of the form, 'Cllr XY writes in a individual capacity. She/he does not write on behalf of Ryde Town Council and the views expressed here are not necessarily the views of Ryde Town Council.' Councillors must always be vigilant about not misrepresenting the Town Council or harming the long-term reputation of the Town Council. Councillors who are unsure about any of these matters must refer to the Code of Conduct.
- (b) Such individual statements by Councillors must make no reference to any Town Council employee and must not use the Town Council logo. References to other Councillors should normally be avoided. The Town Council address and telephone number cannot be included as points of contact.
- (c) Councillors are solely responsible for writing, production, and distribution of all individual press releases and letters to the media.
- (d) Councillors must not misuse Council resources or reputation for political or other purposes.
- (e) Councillors may include only brief excerpts, links to, and references to official Town Council press releases in their newsletters or other documents that they release as individual Councillors. Large extracts from or complete Town Council press releases cannot be reproduced.