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Approved no changes 12.12.2022 Reviewed no changed 15.02.2024 Approved by full Council  
11.3.2024

# **Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council**

## **Media Policy and Guidelines**

### **Overview**

Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council (“the Council”) is an established and highly respected organisation. We have a reputation for providing excellent, professional services and we enjoy strong relationships with our service providers, contractors and residents.

While providing this service, the news media can be interested in the Council’s activities, or what is happening in the village of Hopton-on-Sea.

We have a responsibility to be open and responsive to their information requests because the media are among the many ways our residents, customers and business partners build their individual perceptions of the Council and the work we do in the community we serve.

### **Purpose**

This policy exists to assure that information disclosed by the Council is timely, accurate, comprehensive, authoritative and relevant to all aspects of the Council. Adherence to this policy is intended to provide an effective and efficient framework to facilitate the timely dissemination of information.

### **Scope**

This media policy applies to all Members of the Council and covers all external news media including broadcast, electronic and print.

Information passed to the media is effectively correspondence and should be brought to the attention of all Members and the Proper Officer of the Council.

Best endeavours should be made to obtain media copy prior to publication and this is to be forwarded to Members and the Proper Officer of the Council.

### **Designation of Council Spokesperson**

In accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders 21.a) and 21.b), all policy decisions are relayed to the press via the Chairman or the Proper Officer of the Council.

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Individual Councillors' comments must state that they are the opinion of the individual and not the view of the full Council.

The Chairman and Proper Officer have responsibility, when dealing with the media, to:

- Increase public awareness and understanding of the Parish Council and the services that are provided to the community.
- Promote a positive public image of the Council and the work we do.

Depending on the situation, an individual Councillor may be asked to be a spokesperson on a particular issue due to their knowledge, experience and expertise. The Chairman and/or Proper Officer will work with that Designated Councillor to prepare them for the media interview as needed.

Preparation may include developing talking points as well as training and practicing for the interview.

### **Guidelines for Talking with the Media**

A reporter, producer or other news media representative may contact you for a number of reasons, for example:

- To get information about the Parish Council.
- To get general information on a topical story in the community such as changes in local governmental officials or policies, problems or issues specific to the community we serve, etc.

Refer all media calls to the Chairman or Proper Officer of the Council.

Please do not say you are not allowed to talk to a reporter or have to get permission to do so.

Instead, tell the reporter: "The Parish Council's policy is to refer all media inquiries to the Chairman or Proper Officer. You can reach them at (provide the telephone numbers)."

Whenever taking a call from the media, the same courtesy and professionalism in which we approach customers should be displayed toward the media. Please act quickly when approached by the media to ensure that the reporter's deadline is met. This is important because the way this call is handled may be the reporter's first impression of the Parish Council and that first impression may end up in the story published or the news segment broadcast. In order to promote our customer

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service image, it is important to respond quickly, courteously and professionally to all media calls.

It is always beneficial to prepare in advance in order to provide accurate and relevant information to the media. The Chairman and Proper Officer will liaise in a timely manner in relation to any press release, provided it is practical to do so.

### **Guidelines for Photographs and Film**

A similar process as described above will be used when someone from the media is requesting permission to take photographs or to film an event.

Refer the caller to the Chairman or Proper Officer of the Council.

In accordance with Standing Orders 3.j) and 3.k) filming, photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a Council meeting by any means is permitted subject to current legislation. The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of the meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

If there are minors present at the meeting, or a resident in attendance makes it clear to the Parish Council that they do not wish to be filmed, the Council will bring this to the attention of the media, who should comply with the residents' wishes. This is to protect vulnerable people who may be attending a Council meeting and do not wish to be filmed. Ultimately, should the filming continue despite the media being made aware of vulnerable people in attendance, the Parish Council should make a note and contact the relevant media organisation to make a formal complaint.

The media are subject to their own code of conduct which should be adhered to.

The media cannot block the entrance to our facility or prevent people from entering our facility or conducting business as usual.

Be courteous and friendly, but also remember that no matter how congenial or affirming the reporter, photographer or camera crew are, everything you say and do may be observed and reported by the media representative who is trying to make the facility come alive for their audience.

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## **Guidelines for Seeking Media Coverage**

In circumstances in which you believe you have a positive news story to share with the public, contact the Chairman or Proper Officer of the Council who shall liaise and prepare a press release.

## **Misrepresentation**

Statements made to the media by the Chairman, Proper Officer or the Designated Councillor must be factual and should accurately reflect the Council's position on the subject discussed.

Occasionally, these statements may be misreported and it is appropriate to revert to the media to correct factual errors or clarify ambiguities.

In this instance, the originator of the statements should communicate with the media concerned being concise and balanced in tone with all correspondence copied to the Chairman and Proper Officer.