

EAST GOSCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY



Approved by: Full Council

Date: 18th May 2026

Last reviewed: 16.6.25

Next review due: May 2027

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

KEYS AIMS

The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions, and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

It is important that the press have access to the Clerk/ Members and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

The Clerk and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.

Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers, and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who is responsible and appropriate action was taken.

When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made. Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Members that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although Member contact details are in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk before any response is made to the media.

When responding to approaches from the media, the Clerk or the Chair are authorised to make contact with the media.

Statements made by the Chair and the Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion.

Other Councillors can talk to the media but must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given were their own and not necessarily those of the Council.

There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

ATTENDANCES OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports, and minutes are sent to the media on request.

The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be made available.

Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the Clerk and Chair of the meeting (see Standing Orders and the Council's Procedure for Recording of Meetings).

PRESS RELEASES

The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

The Clerk or any Member may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

The Parish Council has its own quarterly newsletter which is published in 'Long Furrow' which is

delivered free to all households in the parish. It aims to promote Council policies, services, activities and initiatives. The content is created in-house. Ideas for articles will be welcomed and should be passed directly to the Clerk.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media covers the use of social networking websites such as, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, content communities, websites, and blogs.

The Council currently maintains a website, with all information uploaded via the office. The Parish Office manages the Facebook page for the Parish Council, which includes Parish News, information from the Resilience Group, Neighbourhood Watch, and Village Hall Committees, as well as sharing important updates from other authorities and organisations. Information is also sent to social media community pages to ensure the public remain informed.

Employees, Councillors, and volunteers must make it clear when publishing content online that they are speaking on their own behalf by writing in the first person and by using a personal email address. Remember that what is published has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed. Councillors should be particularly careful as even though being a Councillor should never be mentioned when posting online, a member of the public may know they are a Councillor and may relate the post to that of the Council. Councillors should refer to the Code of Conduct.

CHANGES

This policy will be a living document and will be able to be altered by the Parish Clerk to allow immediate action should the unexpected arise. This will be key to overcoming teething problems that have not already been identified. Changes to the policy will be highlighted at the next Council meeting to keep Members abreast of the changes.

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date.....