

Press & Media Policy 2020-21

Preamble

This policy applies on those occasions when the Town Council, as a body corporate, is asked for a statement, a comment or information from the media, or as a body corporate issues a press release, or information to factually clarify/correct other comments published in the media. Media is defined as any activity “reporting” on the Town Council.

This policy does not, and is not intended to, apply when individual Councillors are contacted directly by the media for a personal comment/statement nor when individual Councillors contact the media with a personal statement. In such cases it should be made clear that is the individual’s own opinion/comment, not that of the Town Council.

Policy Statement

Felixstowe Town Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers information and takes decisions. As a Town Council we will therefore proactively seek opportunities to publish information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what the Town Council is doing.

Procedures

Notes:

- (i) When the Mayor is unavailable the Deputy Mayor will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities.
- (ii) When the Town Clerk is unavailable the Deputy Town Clerk will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities.

1. Requests from the Media

- 1.1 All staff should make the Mayor and/or the Town Clerk aware of all approaches from the media for interviews, statements or information.
- 1.2 Any request from the media will be discussed by the Mayor and Town Clerk and then forwarded to the most appropriate person - Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair or Vice-Chair, Town Clerk or combination of those people to make a response on behalf of the Town Council.
- 1.3 Prior to its release, the Mayor and Town Clerk should be made aware of the broad content of any response.

2. Response to Media Articles, Published Letters, Online comments, Tweets, Facebook items

- 2.1 Every situation must be carefully assessed and in many cases a corporate response will not be appropriate.

- 2.2 Anyone seeing an article / item and thinking a corporate response may be needed should inform the Mayor and the Town Clerk.
- 2.3 In assessing whether or not a corporate response is appropriate the following will be considered:
- Is the article / item in question factually accurate?
 - Is the article / item expressing a personal view – and if so is that clearly stated?
 - Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?
- 2.4 Any potential corporate response will be discussed by the Town Clerk and the Mayor and then forwarded to the most appropriate person - Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair or Vice-Chair, Town Clerk or combination of those people to prepare a response on behalf of the Town Council.
- 2.5 Prior to its release the Mayor and Town Clerk should be made aware of the broad content of any corporate response where they were not involved in its preparation.

3. Media Releases

- 3.1 The Town Clerk, Mayor and Committee Chairs will identify issues and stories that have the potential to be interest to the public.
- 3.2 The Town Clerk will draft corporate media releases consulting with the Mayor and Committee Chairs or any individual Councillor as appropriate.
- 3.3 An information copy of the final corporate media release will be sent to the Mayor and any Councillor who is quoted in the text.
- 3.4 Corporate media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor.
- 3.5 A copy of the corporate media release will be posted on the Town Council's website.
- 3.6 A copy of the corporate media release will be sent to Councillors and staff.

4. Media Training

- 4.1 Opportunities will be made for all Councillors and the Town Clerk to attend media-related training.

5. Decision Making

- 5.1 The Town Council's Standing Orders (No 21) refer to relations with the press / media and the Town Council's policy - this media and publicity policy and procedures is the relevant policy.

5.2 Any decision about the content of corporate media releases or information to be supplied to the media or any response to any media item will be taken by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor. (This delegation complies with the legislative restriction that an individual Town Councillor cannot make a decision on behalf of the Council.)

6. Social Media Policy

6.1 Social media accounts operated by the Town Council will be used to help keep local residents, businesses, interested parties and visitors to the town informed of important Town Council related news, events and updates.

6.2 The accounts will be managed by the Town Clerk on behalf of the Town Council who will seek to ensure that any legal obligations or best practice guidelines are adhered to.

6.3 Members of the public can expect social media updates covering some or all of the following:

- Alerts such as news, publications, events, publicity campaigns, Council/Committee meetings and new content on our other digital channels
- Invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which we are consulting
- Information about or from our partners or other local groups about what they're doing
- Occasional live coverage of events

6.4 The Town Council may follow or subscribe to social media accounts from other users. This does not imply endorsement of any kind.

6.5 The accounts will be updated and monitored during working hours only and will be non-political. Political posts will be removed and the Town Council will not engage on issues of party politics at any time.

6.6 Inappropriate language or anything that might contravene [libel](#), [defamation](#), [copyright](#) or [data protection laws](#) will be removed.

6.7 Online social media sites may occasionally be unavailable and the Town Council accepts no responsibility for lack of service.

6.8 Feedback and ideas are welcomed from all sections of the community and the Town Council will endeavour to join the conversation where possible. However, it may not be possible to reply individually to all messages.

6.9 Emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant persons.

Policy Approved:

Review Body: Civic & Community Committee recommendation to Council

Review Period: Annually

Next Review: C&C (February 2021) / Council (March 2021)