



Press and Media Policy

Backwell Parish Council

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Introduction

Effective communication with the press and media is a vital part of the Parish Council's commitment to openness and community engagement. This policy outlines the framework for such communication, ensuring accuracy, transparency, and consistency. The Communications Officer will be the primary point of contact for media enquiries and responsible for coordinating public messaging, in consultation with the Clerk.

Aims and Objectives

The Council aims to:

- Ensure consistent, factually correct and professional communication with the media.
- Promote informed public debate and understanding of Parish Council decisions and actions.
- Maintain the integrity and reputation of the Parish Council.

General Principles

- All contact with the media shall be conducted in a positive and proactive manner.
- Councillors and Officers must be mindful of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders in all dealings with the media.
- When speaking to the media, Councillors must distinguish between personal views and those of the Council.
- The Communications Officer will support Councillors and Officers to ensure that messages issued to the media align with Council policy and values.

Role of Councillors

- Councillors may respond directly to media enquiries but must consider:
 - a. The capacity in which they are speaking (personal or on behalf of the Council);
 - b. The potential implications of the information being shared;
 - c. The need to consult with the Clerk or fellow Councillors when in doubt.
- If a Councillor is providing a personal opinion, this must be clearly stated as such.
- Councillors wishing to issue written statements or articles in their role as Councillor must first seek approval from the Clerk, who will circulate it to other members before publication.

Role of the Clerk and Communications Officer

- The Communications Officer is the primary point of contact for press and media enquiries and is responsible for coordinating responses, preparing statements, and issuing press releases on behalf of the Council.
- Given that the Communications Officer works part-time, there may be occasions when they are unavailable. In such cases, the Clerk will act as the main point of contact for media enquiries.
- The Clerk retains overall oversight of communication and will ensure that any public messaging aligns with the Council's decisions and policies.
- All formal media statements will be prepared by the Communications Officer (or the Clerk where appropriate), in consultation with the Clerk (or Chairman / Vice-Chairman).

- Statements will be circulated to relevant members for comment, with responses to be provided within the stipulated timeframe

Press Statements and Releases

- Press releases will usually be drafted by the Communications Officer, in consultation with the Clerk and relevant Councillors. Members will be given a deadline to provide comments before release.
- Where the Communications Officer is unavailable, the Clerk will take responsibility for drafting and issuing press releases.
- Members should not issue press releases on behalf of the Council.
- All official statements and press releases will be distributed to the Council's media contacts and retained for record-keeping purposes.
- Ward-related matters may require consultation with relevant Ward Councillors.

Use of AI Tools

The Parish Council may make use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the drafting of media content and press releases. All use of AI is governed by the Council's separate AI Use Policy, which outlines the standards and safeguards in place

Freedom of Information

The Council acknowledges the media's right to access information under the Freedom of Information Act and will cooperate with such requests in line with statutory obligations.

Date of policy: September 2026

Date for next review: September 2028

— policy ends here —