

CHERHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Press & Media Policy

INTRODUCTION

Cherhill Parish Council (“the Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council’s publication scheme, enquirers should contact the Clerk or, in his/her absence, the Chair.

The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet (“the media”).

This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

This policy is subject to the Council’s obligations which are set out in the relevant legislation and the Council’s standing orders and financial regulations. The Council’s financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available on the cherhill.org website.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information, the disclosure of which, is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council’s standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available on the cherhill.org website.

MEETINGS

A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution or agenda. In accordance with the Council’s standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council’s standing orders.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for

a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:

- the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or
- such activities disrupt the proceedings

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

Requests for factual information

Where possible Councillors and the Clerk may refer enquirers to the policies, agenda and minutes already published on the cherhill.org website if these provide the necessary information. Councillors should advise the Clerk of their response. No further comment should be offered.

Other requests should be directed to the Clerk who as appropriate will:

- respond in accordance with the Freedom of Information Policy, or
- place the request on the agenda of the next meeting for discussion, or
- contact the Chair who (in an emergency) will decide if it is in the clear interests of residents to prepare a response in advance of the next meeting. The Clerk will inform councillors of all such requests and responses.

Requests for opinion

Neither a councillor nor the Clerk should offer an opinion on behalf of the Council on a matter that has not been discussed and minuted. Such requests should be directed to the Clerk who will arrange for them to be placed on a future agenda.

This is not intended to restrict the freedom of councillors to offer personal opinions. Councillors are, however, responsible for:

- Ensuring that it is clear that these opinions are their own and not those of the Council
- Abiding by the Council Code of Conduct as published.

Requests for interviews

Requests for interviews on behalf of the Council should be declined unless approved at a meeting.

MAKING APPROACHES TO THE PRESS AND MEDIA

The Council's own information and opinion

Subjects which the Council wishes to publicise through the press or media should be discussed at a meeting where the purpose, content, timing and method of doing so can be agreed.

Drafts by a councillor or the Clerk should be reviewed prior to publication and should be circulated by the Clerk to confirm that the draft reflects the Council's intentions. If responses indicate conflicting opinions about its content then these must be discussed at a further meeting before publication.

Third party information

Information may be received from third parties which the Council could publicise. These should be directed to the Clerk.

- Where this information is non-commercial, factual, publicly available, non-confidential and likely to be of interest to residents the Clerk may publicise it by any convenient means. This must be done in a manner that does not imply support from the Council of any particular view
- After discussion at a meeting the Council may agree to relay information from a commercial organisation. It must be made clear that this does not imply any endorsement by the Council and is relayed for the information of residents only.