

9. PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within Enborne Parish Council for working with the press and media.

The intention of this policy is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media. Enborne Parish Council is accountable to the local community for its actions. Effective two-way communications with the media (press, radio, TV, internet and notice-boards etc.) convey information to the community.

9.2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. Enborne Parish Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. In particular, Officers and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of Enborne Parish Council in all their dealings with the media. Confidential documents including exempt Minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media.

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 Enborne Parish Council's solicitor before any response is made. There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Members that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These issues include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number, 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.

9.3 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

Responses to the press relating to matters discussed by the Parish Council shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Parish Clerk. Enborne Parish Council Chairman is also authorised to give the views of Enborne Parish Council to the press on any non-confidential subject discussed by Enborne Parish Council.

Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of Enborne Parish Council be given to the press in a way which could be interpreted as the view of Enborne Parish Council as a whole.

Caution should be exercised when submitting letters to the editor for publication in newspapers. There are occasions when it is appropriate for

Enborne Parish Council to submit a letter, for example, to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. However, such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks.

Letters, social media and any public comments on websites representing the views of Enborne Parish Council should only be submitted by the Chair or the Clerk. If individual members choose to send letters to express their own opinions on Council policies, they are strongly advised to check their facts first with the Clerk. It should always be made absolutely clear whether the views put forward are those of Enborne Parish Council or of an individual Member.

At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of Enborne Parish Council.

9.4 MEDIA ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceeding of a meeting of Enborne Parish Council by any means is permitted if this does not disrupt the meeting. Members of the public not wishing to be filmed will, on making themselves known to the Chairman, be seated separately as appropriate.

The Press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of the report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

9.5 PRESS RELEASES

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

The Clerk or Members may draft a press release; however, they must all be issued by the Clerk following agreement by the Chair.

9.6 NOTICES

Enborne Parish Council website will be used to convey information on matters of interest and latest news and will be updated regularly by the Chair and/or the Clerk.

Parish noticeboards will be used for the advertising of agendas, minutes and other Parish Council or District Council information.