

MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL Press/Media Policy

Melbourn Parish Council's interaction with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying needs and measuring satisfaction. Effective information, news and media relations are an essential factor. This policy does not set out to be comprehensive, but is to guide Parish Council Members and anyone employed by the Council in their relations with the news media.

1. The term media encompasses many different means of communicating information to a wide audience and whilst not exhaustive includes the following: Radio, Television, Internet, Newspapers, Magazines, Leaflets, and Posters.
2. If a Councillor receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council this must be referred as speedily as practicable to the Chair and the Clerk. Where this is a matter where no Council Policy has yet been made the matter should be considered by the full council at the next scheduled meeting or, if of sufficient importance, at an extraordinary meeting; before a formal reply is given.
3. The Council should make every effort to respond promptly to requests for information. Enquiries or requests for can only be responded to by the Clerk, after consultation with and authorisation by the Chair and or Vice Chair if an appropriate Council Policy exists, or after discussion with the full council if a Policy or position needs to be agreed. Wherever possible the Clerk will prepare all written Press Releases or Statements and copies must be retained. The format and content must be prepared in association and agreed with the Chair and or Vice Chair and other members should they be required. The sample principle applies to broadcast (verbal) material.
4. The disclosure and sharing of information should normally be restricted to matters that have been discussed as an Agenda Item by the Parish Council with the exception of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. In the case of such a request the Clerk should prepare a suggested course of action so that the Council complies fully with the Requirements of the Act. There is the obligation to act with integrity and respect for Council policy once made. No information of a confidential nature may be disclosed. No matter relating to the conduct or capability of a Councillor at a Meeting can be disclosed.
5. No employee (other than the Clerk) or Councillor should contact the media on any matter related to the Parish Council unless specifically authorised by the Chair, (or in his/her absence), the Vice Chair. However nothing is contained in these guidelines that seeks to prevent any individual from expressing a personal opinion for example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on the internet. Where personal views expressed differ from council policy this must be made clear. Care must be taken not to misrepresent and or bring the Parish Council into disrepute or undermine any decision made and must take account of the role and responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.

6. When in attendance at any public meeting as a representative of Melbourn Parish Council an individual is required to act with integrity at all times and ensure that any comments they make are entirely accurate and reflect the views of the council as a whole or, if not, that this is made known.

___BOB TULLOCH _____

___25 JANUARY 2016_____

Chairman

Date