

NORTHALLERTON TOWN COUNCIL



Media Policy

Statutory requirements are in bold type

1. Purpose

Northallerton Town Council recognises the role of its relationship with the local community in influencing the work and decisions it takes. Effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Town Council and the community. This policy sets out the framework for Town Council members and employees to follow when in contact with the media, to inform the public about the Town Council's activities, decisions and the services it provides. The term "media" encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience and includes radio, television, the Council's website and a wide range of printed media such as newspapers, leaflets and posters, but does not include social media, which are covered under a separate policy.

2. Contact with the Media

- 2.1 The Clerk shall act as the Media Officer for the Town Council. Any official contact with the media concerning the Town Council's policies, decisions and services should be initiated through the Clerk. The Clerk will clear all press reports or comments to the media with the Mayor of the Town Council or, in their absence, the Deputy Mayor.
- 2.2 Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk and/or Mayor or, in their absence, the Deputy Mayor, in association with other councillors as required, and will be informally restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Town Council.
- 2.3 If a councillor or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Town Council, it should be referred to the Clerk. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Mayor or, in their absence, the Deputy Mayor, in consultation with other councillors as necessary, about the format and content of any response.
- 2.4 Unless a councillor has been authorised by the Town Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, if comments are made to the media then councillors must make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it is clearly reported as such.
- 2.5 Any councillor taking part in a radio or television broadcast should only do so on behalf of the Town Council with the approval of the Clerk and/or Mayor or, in their absence, the deputy Mayor, in consultation with other councillors where necessary. Ideally, arrangements should be made for the broadcast to be recorded and retained for reference. Alternatively, a note of the broadcast's content should be made and sent to the Clerk.



- 2.6 Councillors who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Clerk and Mayor or, in their absence, the Deputy Mayor, so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.
- 2.7 Councillors are not prevented from expressing a personal opinion through the media e.g. by writing to a newspaper or posting an opinion on a website. However, they must make it clear that any views expressed are their own views. Councillors should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Town Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Council's Code of Conduct.
- 3. Public Meetings Recording and Filming**
- 3.1 **Subject to 3.2 below person who attends a Full Council or Committee meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.**
- 3.2 **A person present at a Full Council or Committee meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.**
- 3.3 Any filming of the public should not include children, the vulnerable or other members of the public who actively object to being filmed, without undermining the broader transparency of the meeting.
- 3.4 Members of the public/press who are taking part in filming or audio recording of a meeting must not act in a disruptive manner i.e. any action or activity that disrupts the conduct of meetings or impedes other members of the public from seeing, hearing, filming etc. the proceedings. Anyone displaying disruptive behaviour may be excluded from the meeting.
- 3.5 If at any time it becomes necessary to close the meeting to the public (usually due to matters of confidentiality), filming and recording will also be requested to stop.
- 3.6 If the Town Council intends to webcast its meetings, the Clerk will notify the public in advance.
- 3.7 Social media-using councillors and members of-the public are permitted to report from meetings by any form of social media, provided it is not disruptive and does not detract from the proper conduct of the meeting. Councillors may not report confidential information from any section of a meeting that has been closed to the public and must comply with the Council's Social Media Policy.