

## LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

### DRAFT MEDIA POLICY

Ledbury Town Council's Media Policy provides Councillors and employees guidance on all aspects of dealing with the media.

All Ledbury Town Council media activity must comply with relevant legislation and follow the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity issued under the Local Government Act 1986.

The Recommended Practice sets out rules around content and style of publicity, dissemination, advertising and promotion of individual Councillors.

#### Media Relations and the Law

All Ledbury Town Council's media activity must pay particular regard to the following legislation:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Data Protection Act 1998/GDPR Regulations 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010

The Council may determine that some matters will be considered in private. This may arise where a report contains confidential information or information exempt from publication as prescribed by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Any such report shall be marked "**CONFIDENTIAL**" and printed on pink paper for ease of identification and must not be released to the media

A copy of the Code of Recommended Practice can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recommended-code-of-practice-for-local-authority-publicity>

Relevant points to observe from within the Code include:-

- Local authorities are accountable to their electorate. Local accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by local authorities explaining their objectives and policies to their electors and ratepayers. In recent year's authorities have increasingly used publicity to keep the public informed, and to encourage greater participation. Local authorities also need to tell the public about the services which they provide. Increasingly, local authorities see the task of making the public aware of the services available as an essential part of providing all kinds of services. Good, effective publicity to keep the public informed and to encourage greater participation. Local authorities also need to tell the public about the services which they provide. Increasingly, local authorities see the task of making the public aware of the

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services available as an essential part of providing all kinds of services. Good, effective publicity, aimed at improved public awareness of a Council's activities, is to be welcomed. This Code is not intended to discourage such publicity. Any publicity describing the Council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation of both.

- Any publicity describing the Council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation of both
- Publicity relating to the provision of a services should concentrate on providing factual information about the service
- Publicity campaigns by local authorities are appropriate in some circumstances i.e. to promote the effective and efficient use of local services and facilities, or to attract tourists or investment. Publicity campaigns may also be an appropriate means of influencing public behaviour or attitudes on such matters as health, safety and crime prevent or race relations
- Legitimate concern is, however, caused by the use of public resources for some forms of campaign which are designed to have a persuasive effect. Publicity campaigns can provide an appropriate means of ensuring that the local community is properly informed about a matter relating to a function of the local authority and about the authority's policies in relation to that function and the reasons for them. But local authorities, like other public authorities, should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.
- Councillors and Officers will, when dealing with the media, be mindful of the obligations set out in the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

### Scope

This media policy applies to all Ledbury Town Councillors and employees and all partner organisations when delivering services on the council's behalf.

### Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Media Handling

#### **The Mayor**

- The Mayor will be quoted in media releases or statements where the matter is of Council-wide significance or crosses several portfolio areas. The Mayor will also be quoted when another Portfolio Holder is unavailable
- If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor will assume the responsibilities as described above
- In the event that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are both unavailable, another member of the Administration will be quoted
- **All** responses will be considered in consultation with the Town Clerk to ensure content is legal and within the parameters of this policy



### **Committee Chairs**

- If the Council receives an enquiry about service delivery, the Clerk will discuss the matter with the relevant Chair and work with them and/or the Deputy Chair as appropriate to agree a response
- Chairs are quoted in relation to activity and decisions in their Committee Areas and will be supported in their role as Chairperson and not in their role as a member of a political party
- In the absence of the Committee Chair/Deputy Chair another member of the Administration can be quoted or take part in media activity.

### **Individual Councillors**

- Generally, it will not be possible for the Clerk to issue media releases or post news on the Council's web or social media sites initiated by Councillors in their role as an individual Councillor
- The Clerk can arrange for the provision of general media training and support to all Councillors as required. This guidance will be non-political
- Where any media or communications support is provided to a Councillor, for example, broadcast media training, the same level of support must be available to all Councillors if they request it.

### **Town Clerk**

- On occasions it may be appropriate for the Town Clerk or the Deputy Town Clerk to take part in media activity
- The Town Clerk is responsible for alerting the Mayor or Committee Chairs promptly to any issues that may be of a media interest.

### **Employees**

- Employees are responsible for alerting the Clerk or Deputy Clerk in the absence of the Clerk, promptly to any issues that may be of media interest.
- Employees will ensure that any direct media contact is passed onto the Town Clerk immediately
- Employees must also ensure the factual accuracy of all information provided for use in any media activity
- Employees will immediately pass media enquiries onto the Clerk or Deputy Clerk, they should not make any comments directly to the media

### **Monitoring Officer**

- The County Council's Monitoring Officer is available to consider and advise on any aspect of media communications
- Where a matter of concern arises in relation to media communications, proposed or otherwise, this should be brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer.

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### Advance Process

- Media activities will be decided by the Town Clerk, as necessary, in consultation with the Mayor or Committee Chairperson.
- **All** media activity requires Councillor and Officer sign-off before issue. This will involve the relevant Committee Chairperson, Mayor or other member of Administration in their absence, as well as the Clerk of Deputy Clerk.
- Invitations to take part in media photo opportunities will be agreed by the Committee Chairperson or Mayor
- When deadlines are pressing, media activity for the Council can be signed-off by the Town Clerk.
- Media activity dealing with the controversial or legal matters, including court cases will also be reviewed by the Council's legal representatives in addition to the relevant Councillor and Officer.

### Web and Social Media

This Media Policy extends to Ledbury Town Council's web and social media sites. Any posts or comments online which do not adhere to the Media Policy will be removed and a statement posted on-line to explain this.

### Campaigns

If the Council is asked to run a campaign in partnership with local media the Mayor, in consultation with the Town Clerk will consider whether the campaign helps to deliver the Council's priorities and enhances the Council's reputation.

The Council may, at times, be asked to facilitate and support Government Campaigns. Approval by Council will be sought in each case before any such support is given.

### Partnership Working and Working with Inspectorates

- The Town Clerk will be proactive in seeking opportunities to promote the work of the Council
- The Mayor, Committee Chairs and the Town Clerk will work with the Council's partners to ensure that Ledbury Town Council is represented appropriately in any media partnership activities.
- Where other organisations are contracted to provide services on behalf of the Council they will be expected to follow this Media Policy. In practice this may mean collaborating with the Town Clerk

Visits by MP's and other VIP's

If a visit is arranged by Westminster or other organisation, then they will co-ordinate all associated media activity with the Town Clerk

If Ledbury Town Council invites an MP or other official to an event, then the Council will co-ordinate the media publicity.

Further Advice and Guidance

Where an issue arises in relation to media activity which is not covered by this policy, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk.

If necessary, breaches of this policy will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures or Councillors Code of Conduct, whichever is appropriate.

Date adopted by the Council – \*\*\*\*\*

Date for Review – \*\*\*\*\*

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