

Crowle & Ealand Town Council

Media Policy



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Introduction

The Council's relationship 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 attitudes and measuring satisfaction across all media platforms.

Effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between the Council and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on media for local information and news, it is important for the Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.

The community in this sense includes all residents and elected representatives, businesses, schools, shops, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.

This document sets out the framework for Council Members and employees to follow in contacting the media, informing the public about the Council's activities, the decisions it takes and the services it provides and the rules and regulations for proper use of any social media accounts

Media Opportunities

The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience, and includes broadcast media (radio and television), online media outlets and social media and a wide range of printed media (e.g. newspapers, free sheets, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets, posters).

Different media respond more readily to certain factors. For example, newspapers are more likely to print a general interest story if supplied with a photograph, radio items tend to be quite brief with a short 'sound bite', television producers will want moving pictures to illustrate a story and social media is a more instant hit, directed from both the Council and the Community.

Newspapers, Reporters and Broadcast Media

Making Contact with the Media

The general principle is that the Clerk will act as the Press Officer. Any official contact with the media concerning the Council's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides, are to be initiated through the Clerk.

Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk and/or Mayor in association with other Members (as required) and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Council.

Other Members of the Council and employees who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Clerk to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.

If a member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Council, it should be referred to the Clerk. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Mayor, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.

Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper or social media posts. Members must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council Policy, are their own personal views. However, members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Model Code of Conduct.

Employees (other than the Clerk) should not contact the media on any matter relating to the Council unless specifically authorised by the Clerk and/or Mayor of the Council.

All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference.

Talking to the Media

In response to a Council press release:

- a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Clerk.
- b) No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)

In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist or reporter (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations)

- a) The views of the Council may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.
- b) The Clerk should be informed so that facts can be checked and appropriate action taken.

Monitoring

It is important to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, letters) about the Council in order to know:

- a) whether press releases and statements issued by the Council are picked up and used effectively.
- b) what members of the community are saying about the Council.

Members and employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Council in the media – original press cuttings should be sent to the Clerk. It is not permissible to send photocopies.

Anyone taking part in a radio or television broadcast should try to arrange for it to be recorded and a copy sent to the Clerk. In the absence of a recording, a note of the broadcast's contents should be sent.

Social Media Accounts and Interaction

Management

All accounts will be created and managed solely by the Clerk. No council member will have access to the administration of these accounts page or any other social media account subsequently created.

Only information regarding the Town will be entered. Other events taking place may be promoted at the discretion of the Clerk after taking advice from the Mayor.

The accounts will link to pages of a local government organisation or organisations /causes relating to the Town and other links at the discretion of the clerk.

No religious or political views will be expressed and Crowle and Ealand Town Council will be mindful at all times of its Equality & Diversity Policy when administering the page.

“Friends” will not be allowed to post new topics to the Facebook “wall”. However, friends will be able to comment on wall topics created by the Town Council.

The Town Council’s logo will be used as the profile picture for any accounts.

Photo Albums will be open for everyone to view.

Photographs uploaded will not have direct view of any child’s face unless the necessary consents have been obtained.

The accounts will be maintained by the Clerk who will remove any messages or comments which contain abusive language content which may cause offence to a specific group of people e.g. comments on a person’s sexuality, sexist comments or racial comments or any other comment which may be potentially libellous or likely to cause offence in any way.

If any matters raised are relevant and need to be discussed by the Council then further information will be sought and brought to the relevant council or committee meeting.

Event dates may be created for any Council event taking place. Other events taking place in the town may be promoted.

Any person that repeatedly abuses the Council’s account will be removed from the friends/followers list and unable to post to the Council’s page. Examples of behaviour that would result in removal would include:

- * Repeatedly posting using abusive language.
- * Posting comments which may cause offence to a specific group of people e.g. comments of a person’s sexuality, sexist comments, racial comments etc.
- * Posting comments that are potentially libellous or,
- * Any other comment which may cause offence in any way.

The account will not be used for playing games, adding applications, or anything of a personal nature.

Any posts by “friends/followers” raising issues/questions/comments that cannot be answered “simply” will be provided with the Council e-mail address and asked to contact the Clerk. Private messages will be sent in response to anyone sending an initial private message to the Council account. If a “simple” response does not satisfy the enquiry, then similarly the person will be asked to email the Council with the request for comment.

Articles and photographs for inclusion on fb:

Councillors can request items to be included by sending photographs, posters or draft posts by e-mail to the clerk at clerk@crowleandelandcouncil.org.

Review

This policy will be a living document and can be altered by the Council, if necessary, to reflect the ever-moving social media ‘goalposts’ and will be formally reviewed annually.