

CRESSAGE, HARLEY AND SHEINTON

PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS & MEDIA POLICY

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Cressage, Harley & Sheinton Parish Council (“the Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council’s Publication Scheme, please contact the Council’s Clerk.

1.2 This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity. The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet (“the media”).

1.3 This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

2.0 Legal requirements and restrictions

2.1 The Access to Local Government Meetings and Documents (England) Local Audit and Accountability Act, requires Local Councils to be open and transparent; this includes:

- Access to and recording of meetings,
- Access to minutes and reports,
- Access to council policies, procedures and financial information.

2.2 This policy is also subject to the Council’s obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, other legislation which may apply and the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Council’s Financial Regulations and relevant Standing Orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council’s Publication Scheme. Details of these can be found in the council’s Publication Scheme available on the website.

2.3 Requests for information about the Council will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the new GDPR Regulations.

2.4 The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information that is prohibited from publication by law, a court order, by legislation, the Council’s standing orders, under contract or by common law.

2.5 Under the Code of Conduct, councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information.

3.0 Meetings

3.1 A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's Standing Orders.

3.2 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 3.3 or 3.4 below apply.

3.3 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

3.4 Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

3.5 The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense. The Council asks that reasonable prior notice is given of any need for such facilities.

3.6 The Council's Standing Orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.

4.0 Other communications with the media

4.1 The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear and state that they are not speaking on behalf of the council.

4.2 Press releases are a positive way of promoting the work of the Council. From time to time the Council or Councillors may also receive media requests to comment on issues. If the enquiry is on behalf of the Council, the Clerk will respond to the request. The content of any press releases and responses to requests from the media, on behalf of the Council, will be authorised by the Clerk & Chairman.

5.0 Website & Social Media

5.1 Only authorised persons (clerk/nominated councillors) are permitted to post material on a social media or a website in the council's name and on its behalf.

5.2 Councillors using social media must make it clear that they are expressing their own views and not those of the Council as a corporate body.

Policy adopted: 4 September 2019

Next review date: September 2021