

# **ST PINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL**

## **PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY**

**to be read in conjunction with (but not limited to)**

**Councillor Code of Conduct**

**Social Media Policy**

**Data Protection and GDPR Policy**

**(January 2026)**

# **St Pinnock Parish Council – Press and Media Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the Media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the Media
- 1.2. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations: rather it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the Media.
- 1.3. The term 'media' encompasses many different means of communicating information to a wide audience and whilst not exhaustive includes the following: radio, television, internet (including social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, X and other similar sites), newspapers, magazines, newsletters, leaflets and posters.
- 1.4. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Social Media Policy, GDPR policy and Councillor Code of Conduct.

## **2. Key Aims**

- 2.1. The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media (examples listed above) are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.
- 2.2. It is important that the press have access to the Clerk and Councillors, and to background information, to assist them in giving accurate information to the public.
- 2.3. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

## **3. The Legal Framework**

- 3.1. The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- 3.2. The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

## **4. Contact with the Media**

- 4.1. The Clerk and Councillors of the Council should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the Media.

- 4.2. Confidential documents (exempt Minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence) should not be leaked to the Media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will be conducted by a Councillor appointed by the full Council, together with one other Councillor, and their findings reported to the Council to ensure the appropriate action is taken.
- 4.3. When the Media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice must be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.
- 4.4. There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Councillors that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although Councillors' contact details may be in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk or the Council's solicitor before any response is made to the Media, the presumption will be that this advice will not normally be made public.
- 4.5. When responding to approaches from the Media, the Clerk and Chairman are authorised to make contact with the Media to express the current previously agreed views of the Council. In specific cases the Clerk or Chairman may authorise other Councillor(s) to respond to Media requests.
- 4.6. If a Member receives an approach or enquiry from the Media about any matter relating to the Council, this must be referred as speedily as practicable to the Clerk and the Chairman (or Vice Chairman in the Chairman's absence). 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 urgency or importance, at an Extraordinary Meeting, before a formal reply is given. Individual Councillors who are asked for a comment by the Media should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- 4.7. The Council should make every effort to respond promptly to requests for information. However, all enquiries or requests for a Statement should not be answered immediately and can only be responded to by the Clerk after consultation with - and authorisation from - the Chairman (or the Vice Chairman) if an appropriate Council Policy exists, or after discussion with the full Council if no appropriate Council Policy exists.
- 4.8. Statements made by the Chairman (or Vice Chairman or other appointed Councillor) and the Clerk should only reflect the Council's agreed position.
- 4.9. There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter; for example, to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk after consultation with - and authorisation from - the Chairman (or the Vice Chairman) if an appropriate

Council Policy exists, or after discussion with the full Council if no appropriate Council Policy exists.

- 4.10. Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to contact the Media on a particular issue, Councillors communicating with the Media should make it clear that any views they express are personal and in no way should give the impression - directly or implied - that they are representing the Council's opinion

## **5. Attendance of Media at Council Meetings**

- 5.1. The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the Media on request.
- 5.2. The Media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be available in consultation with the Clerk.
- 5.3. A 'safe-zone' will be made available for members of the public who feel vulnerable. This area will be made clear to all present, and that it should not be filmed.
- 5.4. The Chairman will remind all attendees that those participating in the Meeting may not be recorded by members of the public or the press without their knowledge, and given the opportunity to leave the Meeting if they so wish.

## **6. Press Releases**

- 6.1. The purpose of a Press Release is to make the Media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information, or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a Press Release may be beneficial.
- 6.2. All Press Releases must be agreed in full by the whole Council, authorised by the Clerk (in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three, the Legal Framework, are adhered to), that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the Press Release can be monitored.
- 6.3. Copies of Press Releases shall be retained on file for 5 years

## **7. Social Media (Refer to Council Social Media Policy)**

- 7.1. Any Social Media portals managed, operated or contributed to by the Council will be monitored by the Clerk to ensure that they are only used to impart information.
- 7.2. Any opinions or information that may be considered offensive to the Council, the Parish and/or individuals will be removed. Councillors or employees of the Council will not directly or indirectly use Social Media to try and influence the Council's decision making.

## **8. Broadcasting**

- 8.1. The right to record, film and to broadcast Meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub Committees is established following the Local Government Audit and

Accountability Act 2014. This is in addition to the rights of the Press and Public to attend such meetings.

- 8.2. The Council will make the meeting space available to the public 15 minutes before and after Meetings for the setting up and removal of any filming equipment.
- 8.3. Members of the public are permitted to film or record meetings to which they are permitted access, in a non-disruptive manner and only from public areas. They are not permitted to add a live commentary to any filming or recording.
- 8.4. Meetings or parts of meetings from which the Press and Public are excluded may not be filmed or recorded.
- 8.5. The use of digital recording tools, for example smartphones or other similar devices will be allowed as long as the recording is carried out in a non-disruptive manner and the Clerk is made aware, prior to recording, that the recording is taking place.
- 8.6. Councillors who choose to use Social Media during Council meetings must refrain from disrupting other Councillors and Council debate
- 8.7. Councillors who choose to record, film or broadcast meetings in any way are reminded of their responsibilities under the Council's Code of Conduct including the confidentiality requirements (NOLAN Principles) and should make the Clerk aware that they are doing so.
- 8.8. While those attending Meetings are deemed to have consented to the filming, recording or broadcasting of meetings (See also 5.3 'safe zone') those exercising the rights to film, record and broadcast must respect the rights of other people attending under the General Data Protection Regulations Act 2018.
- 8.9. The Chairman of the meeting, or any such Council representative as designated by the Chairman, has the authority to stop a Meeting and take appropriate action if any person contravenes these principles or is deemed to be recording in a disruptive manner.
- 8.10. Any person or organisation choosing to film, record or broadcast any Meeting of the Council is responsible for any claims or other liability resulting from them so doing and by choosing to film, record or broadcast proceedings they accept that they are required to indemnify the Council, its Councillors and officers in relation to any such claims or liabilities.
- 8.11. The Council expects those recording proceedings not to edit the film or recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings, or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being filmed or recorded, or distort or alter the original intent or meaning of the views expressed.
- 8.12. The Council will display the requirements and the Chairman will explain in their opening address as to filming, recording and broadcasting at its meeting venues

and those undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted them whether they have read them or not.

- 8.13. The Council will advertise that all Meetings are held in public and could be filmed or recorded by broadcasters, the Media or members of the public.
- 8.14. The Council will include guidance on the filming, recording and broadcasting of meetings on all its published agendas.