

MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

PRESS AND MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Statement – Mistley Parish Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers information and takes decisions. As a Parish Council we will therefore, proactively seek opportunities to public information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what the Parish Council is doing.

Requests from the Media

Requests from the Media are likely to be “ad hoc” and are often urgent so the opportunity to consult can be limited. The Chairman, the Vice-Chairman or the Clerk are the approved spokespersons for the Council. Any other Councillors may make statements, but must make it clear that they are speaking in as individuals and not in an official capacity, unless previously approved to do so by the Council. Contact with the Media should be reported to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity.

Responses to Media Articles, Published Letters, Online Comments, Tweets, WhatsApp and Facebook Items

- Every situation must be carefully assessed and in many cases a corporate response may not be appropriate.
- Anyone seeing an article/item and thinking a corporate response may be needed, should inform the Chairman of the Council.
- In assessing whether or not a corporate response is appropriate the following will be considered:
 - Is the article/item in question factually accurate?
 - Is the article/item expressing a personal view – and if so is that clearly stated?
 - Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?
- Any potential corporate response will be discussed with the Chairman of the Council and then forwarded to the most appropriate person/s to prepare a response on behalf of the Council. E.g. Chairman of a relevant Parish Council Committee etc.
- Prior to its release the Chairman of the Council should be made aware of the broad content of any corporate response where they were not involved in its preparation.

Media Releases

- The Chairman of the Council and Committee Chairs will identify issues and stories that they have the potential to be of interest to the public.
- The Chairman of the Council will draft media corporate releases consulting with the Clerk and Committee Chairs or any individual Councillor as appropriate.
- An information copy of the final corporate media release will be sent to the Chairman of the Council and any Councillor who is quoted in the text.
- Corporate media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Chairman of the Council following consultation (if appropriate and relevant) with the Clerk.
- A copy of the corporate media release will be posted on the Council's website.
- A copy of the corporate media release will be sent to Councillors (and if relevant other Staff).

Media Training

- Opportunities will be made for all Councillors and the Clerk to attend media related training.

Decision Making

- The Council's Standing Orders refer to relations with the press/media and the Council's Policy – this Press and Media Policy and its process and procedures.

- Any decision about the content of corporate media releases or information to be supplied to the media or any responses to any media item will be taken by the Chairman of the Council following consultation (as appropriate and as necessary) with the Clerk.
(This delegation complies with the legislative restriction that an individual Parish Councillor cannot make a decision' on behalf of the Council).

Social Media Policy

- Social media accounts operated by the Council will be used to help keep local residents, businesses and interested parties and visitors to the Village informed of important Parish Council related news, events and updates.
- The accounts will be managed by the nominated representative on behalf of the Council who will seek to ensure that any legal obligations or best practice guidelines are adhered to.
- Members of the public can expect social media updates covering some or all of the following:
 - Alerts such as news, publications, events, publicity campaigns, Council/Committee Meetings and new content.
 - Invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which the Parish Council is consulting.
 - Information about or from our partners or other local groups, and about what they are doing.
 - Occasional live coverage of events if considered appropriate.
- The Council may follow or subscribe to social media accounts from other users (in the future). This does not imply endorsement of any kind. For example, links to the District Council etc.
- Use of the mobile phone application WhatsApp has become more and more relevant, largely replacing texting as one of the most popular forms of communication and with the ease of sending photographs and images - this is a much more instant way of assisting to deliver the Council's services and facilities, albeit in a more informal way. All WhatsApp messages that require a formal decision or resolution are always backed up by emails and at Parish Council Committees (delegated powers) and Meetings.
- Any media accounts will be updated and monitored during working hours only and will be non-political. Political posts will be removed' and the Parish Council will not engage on issues of party politics at any time.
- Inappropriate language or anything that might contravene libel, defamation, copyright or data protection laws will be removed.
- Any online social media sites may occasionally be unavailable' and the Parish Council accepts no responsibility for any lack of service.
- Feedback and ideas are welcomed from the community. However, any response from the Parish Council will be via the Chairman of the Council or the Clerk/Office, i.e. email, letter or by telephone.
- Any emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant person/s for consideration.

*Approved by Parish Council. Review Period – At least annually and normally each May at the Annual Parish Council Meeting. **Adopted 20/05/2019. Last Reviewed 22.05.23. Next Review Date 20.05.24.***