



# Kingsclere Parish Council Press & Media Policy

Reviewed at PPP April 2024 approved at the Annual Meeting of the Council 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## **Point 1:**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the day-to-day relationship between Kingsclere Parish Council and its contact with all forms of the media, including print media, radio, television, and social media.

## **Point 2:**

The intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship between the media and the Council, which will welcome opportunities to talk with the media and directly to the community through social media. Through these channels, the Council will develop contexts for community engagement, the debating of issues and explanation of council priorities and policies. The Council's aims and policies must be presented to the media objectively, factually, without exaggeration and as simply as possible. The Council's communications should demonstrate openness, honesty, friendliness, confidence, fairness and leadership and present the Council as a focal point for building community spirit.

## **Point 3:**

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the local community in holding the Council to account for its policies and actions, so it is important that they have access to the Clerk, administration and councillors, and to relevant background information to assist them in this role. In order to ensure this, minutes and agendas will be posted on the noticeboards in advance of meetings and the media are encouraged to attend meetings, where workspace will be provided.

## **Point 4:**

It is also the case that in such dealings with the media, the Council will defend itself from unfounded criticisms and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant information using other channels of communication if necessary, such as the Council's Facebook page; The Kingsclere Tower or other appropriate place. This is especially significant in matters which may be controversial. Through the media, website and social media the Council will keep the community regularly updated on major proposals and projects affecting the parish.

## **Point 5:**

Officers and Councillors should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council, but particularly in all their dealings with the media and social media.

## **Point 6:**

Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers, and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place

led by the Chairman and Clerk to establish who was responsible and take appropriate action in accordance with the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.

#### **Point 7:**

Press releases are intended 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 all, the Clerk and Councillors, to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial. Similarly, Council-written news and information articles may be posted on the Council website and promoted through social media directly to the community.

#### **Point 8:**

Any Officer or Member may draft a press release or website article, but they must all be issued by the Parish Clerk or Councillor assigned Media responsibility (in discussion with the Chairman where possible), following agreement by the Council or relevant Committee in order to ensure that the principles outlined in Point 2. above are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release or website article can be monitored.

#### **Point 9:**

When responding to approaches from the media, the Chairman of the Council and the Councillor assigned media responsibility should be the authorised contacts with the media in consultation with the Parish Clerk, Council or appropriate committee. If the issue to be discussed is, or is likely to be, the subject of legal proceedings, legal advice must be taken in advance of any statement being issued. Statements made must always reflect the Council's opinion.

#### **Point 10:**

Letters, including those to newspapers, representing the views of the Council should only be issued by the Parish Clerk following agreement by the Council. If individual Members choose to send letters or social media posts expressing an opinion on Council policies, they are strongly advised to check their facts first with the Parish Clerk. It should always be made absolutely clear whether the views put forward are those of the Council or of an individual Councillor.

#### **Point 11:**

Kingsclere Parish Council has social media accounts which are controlled by the Councillor assigned media responsibility. Social media provides a direct two-way communication channel to parishioners which can be used to quickly disseminate information, gather feedback and conduct 'public forum' conversations. Care must be taken to follow the principles in Point 2. Social media posts can take a variety of forms, such as announcements (including from third parties such as the Borough Council), updates on important projects and also lighter material designed to grow community spirit.

#### **Point 12:**

Councillors may comment on social media on Council matters from their personal accounts. However, they must make it clear they are writing in a personal capacity and not representing the Council. Councillors are encouraged to like, share and comment on

Council social media posts as appropriate, in order to increase awareness and support in the community.

### **Policy Adoption History**

As first adopted at the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Readopted at OM on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Reviewed, amended, and adopted at OM 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Reviewed at OM April 2023 approved at the Annual Meeting of the Council 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023