

Canvey Island Town Council

Media/Publicity Policy

Canvey Island Town Council is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. It welcomes enquiries from the Press & Media and recognises that it's relationship with the press helps communicate with residents.

The Council recognises the need for this and it should be reflected in how we deal with the Press.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Town Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Members Code of Conduct.

The Councils approach to the media should be:

- Open and honest
- Proactive
- Responsive and timely
- Information

This policy is subject to the Councils 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, General Data Protection Regulations and any other legislation which may apply.

Information about the Council is available on its website or via the Councils publication scheme. Please contact the Town Clerk.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, legislation, Councils standing orders, under contract or by common law.

Councillors are subject to additional restrictions regarding the disclosure of confidential information which is subject to the Members Code of Conduct.

Meetings

1. A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed or other special reason stated in the resolution.
2. 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 Councils standing orders.
3. Photography, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees is permitted. Please refer to the Recordings of Meeting Policy for more information.

The Councils communication with the Media

This Policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity

1. The Councils communication with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of Councillors are different to the Councils corporate position and views, they must make this clear.
2. The Town Clerk will contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.
3. Members should only distribute information, statements or other material regarding Town Council business if it has been provided by the Town Clerk, through the Town Council Office.

There are two types of press release;

Official Council Press Releases

An official Council press release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole and written by an Officer and issued by the Town Clerk. It is non-party political and includes a quote from the relevant Councillor(s). This is usually the Town Mayor of the Council or Committee Chairman.

Councillor Press Releases

Councillor's press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. This release may or may not be political and **MUST** not include the name of a Council Officer, or a Council telephone number as a point of contact.

It would be beneficial for copies of intended press releases, especially those of a factual nature, to be provided to the Town Clerk. Councillors seeking advice can either contact the Town Clerk or Monitoring Officer.

Press Release Protocol

The following forms the Protocol for Council Members and Officers:

- All official Council press releases will include a quotation from the relevant Councillor. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to also include the Ward Councillor or other Councillor promoting the scheme.
- In line with service standards all official Council press releases are to be issued on a template provided by the Town Clerk. This template includes the Town Council logo.
- Official press releases will not identify a political party or group affiliation of any Member(s) quoted in the release.
- The Town Clerk is the first line of decision making in terms of what is newsworthy for official press releases and shall make the final decision on whether a press release shall be issued, unless otherwise directed by the Council or Committee.
- In an election year, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election, Officers will issue no press releases quoting Council Members. During this time any quotes will be from Officers.

- Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of all councillor press releases and any Editors Letters to the media that do not relate to Council business.
- Council Members should not debate Council business in the Media and should refer any required responses to the Town Clerk.
- Council Member releases must not use the Town Councils logo, or use the Council or an Officer as a point of contact.
- Officers and Council Members must act reasonably and responsibly.
- Council Members are reminded that they must not miss-use Council resources for political or other inappropriate purposes.
- In general, the Town Clerk will be responsible for interpretation of the Protocol.
- Members should be aware that any statements on social media can be taken by the press and published. Any statements made on social media that are regarding Town Council business should adhere to the same protocol and not include any Officer(s) names or an Officer as a point of contact.