



Press and Social Media Procedure and Guidance

This procedure does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive but sets out to provide guidance on how to deal with some of the practical issues that may arise when dealing with the Press and Media.

This document has been prepared as a guidance note for officers and elected members. It represents the policy of the Council in respect of its relationships with the Press and Media.

Town Clerk and Officers of the Council

In the absence of the Town Clerk, media communications will be handled by Senior Officers of the Council in consultation with the Leader of the Majority Group.

In the absence of these officers enquirers will be referred to the Leader of the Majority Group who will act as the spokesperson for the purposes of this element of the procedure.

Where such questions are put to the Town Clerk they should refer the enquirer to the Leader of the Majority Group, Mayor or a Committee Chairman as considered appropriate.

No other officer of the Council, unless authorised or given delegated authority by the Town Clerk, would be permitted to speak or communicate with the Press and Media on any matter affecting the Council or its business.

Members of the Council

- When speaking or providing written material to the Press and Media, Councillors should make clear the capacity, in which they are providing the information. For example: -
 - as Mayor
 - as Chairman of a Committee as a Political Group Leader
 - as an individual (i.e. letter to press for publication)
 - as spokesperson or as Press Officer for a political party
- Never use the prefix "Councillor" when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating Council policy. A copy of any written material sent to the Press and Media by a Member, as representing the Council, must be forwarded to the Town Clerk.
- Take particular care if the press or media approach you for comment on a controversial subject, and do not be led into stating something you did not really

mean to say. If unsure about any particular policy, simply state “no comment” and ask the press to contact the Council Offices.

Dealing with the Press

When dealing with the Press verbally, councillors and officers should be aware of the following:

- Be informed and certain of all your facts
- Ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Town Council that you are aware what Council Policy is and that your comments reflect that Policy.
- Be calm
- Ensure that their comments and views will not bring the Council, its Councillors or its staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libellous nor slanderous.

Issues to be Aware of

- Councillors and officers not used to dealing with the press may be surprised when they see that statements made in all innocence look very different in print than from how they were spoken. It is advantageous to write out a statement or position beforehand.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Copies of Agendas sent to Councillors for meetings of the Council or its Committees will be e-mailed to the Press and Media.

Facilities will be provided at meetings for the Press to take notes of the proceedings.

As provided in the Council’s Standing Orders both the Press and Public may be excluded from a meeting whilst certain confidential matters (as provided for in the relevant legislation) are under discussion.

[Note: The Town Council as a Parish Council is governed by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 as amended by Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A”.

Press Releases

- All press releases made on behalf of the Town Council will be prepared or overseen by the Town Clerk and Leader of the Majority Group following any meetings of Committees, Sub-Committees, Working and Steering Groups.
- The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader of the Majority Group, is also authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a council meeting.

Social Media Policy

Social Media provide alternative channels (to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation) for the Town Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit the Town Council. It also enables the Town Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies (e.g. surrounding parishes, district council and the county council) that deliver services to local people.

Our Rules and Expectations

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which the Town Council will always abide by.

The Town Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally we expect any communications to the Town Council to meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- Not sending large volumes of the same message (also called “spamming”);
- Not to contain anyone’s personal information, other than necessary basic contact details

Channels and responsibilities

The Town Council website is hosted by Space Creative and is normally continuously available. The Town Council will maintain one website <http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk>

The Town Clerk is responsible for publishing content to the website. Other officers will be given delegated power to administer changes should the Town Clerk be unavailable.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Parish Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

Email Channels

The Town Councils email account is monitored by officers during office hours, Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm. Officers aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as they can and within 5 working days.

The Town Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails received and passing them on to the relevant councillors or external agencies to deal with. The recognised procedure for the sending of emails from the Town Council to local residents, businesses and organisations is that they will be sent by the Clerk to the Parish Council. This procedure was adopted to ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Twitter and Facebook

The Town Clerk and Senior Officers will operate and manage twitter feeds and Facebook pages on behalf of the Town Council.

Prepared by: Karen Mann MILCM, Town Clerk.

Date of Approval	27.11.17
Latest date of next Review	30.11.18
Cross Reference Documents	Press and Social Media Policy