

Utterby Parish Council Press and Media Policy

Introduction

This Press and Media Policy has been developed to ensure that the communication between Utterby Parish Council (hereafter referred to as "the Parish Council") and the media is handled in a transparent, accurate, and professional manner. The aim is to maintain a positive relationship with the press and media while ensuring that the Parish Council's interests, policies, and activities are communicated effectively to the public.

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines on how the Parish Council interacts with the media and to establish procedures for managing media inquiries, issuing press releases, and addressing media coverage. This policy applies to all members of the Parish Council, employees, and any volunteers who may be involved in communicating with the media on behalf of the Parish Council.

2. Key Principles

- **Transparency:** The Parish Council aims to be open and transparent in its dealings with the media, providing accurate and timely information about its activities.
- **Accountability:** The Parish Council is accountable to the residents of Utterby. All public communications should reflect this responsibility.
- **Accuracy:** All communications with the press and media should be factual and accurate. Misleading or inaccurate information must not be shared under any circumstances.
- **Consistency:** The Parish Council's messages and views should be consistent across all platforms, and any statements made to the press should align with the official stance of the Parish Council.

3. Media Inquiries

- All media inquiries should be directed to the Parish Clerk. If the Parish Clerk is unavailable, inquiries may be directed to the Chair of the Parish Council or their nominated representative.
- Council members and staff should not engage directly with the media without prior approval from the designated spokesperson.
- All media inquiries must be responded to in a timely and professional manner, ensuring that the response is factual and accurate. If additional time is required to provide a full response, the media should be informed of the delay.

4. Press Releases and Statements

- Press releases will be issued by the Parish Clerk or designated spokesperson when the Parish Council needs to communicate significant events, decisions, or policy changes to the public.

- All press releases should be clear, concise, and contain factual information. They should include contact details for further inquiries.
- Press releases should be distributed to local media outlets, as well as published on the Parish Council's website and social media channels.

5. Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

- Media inquiries relating to confidential or sensitive matters should be handled with care. Any information that is confidential, privileged, or not yet public should not be shared with the media.
- Where there is doubt about the sensitivity of a topic, the Parish Clerk or designated spokesperson should seek advice from the Council or relevant experts before providing any statements to the media.
- The Parish Council will take steps to protect individuals' privacy and ensure that any information released does not contravene data protection laws.

6. Media Coverage of Parish Council Meetings

- Parish Council meetings are open to the public, and the media is encouraged to attend. However, only the designated spokesperson is authorized to speak on behalf of the Council during or after meetings.
- A copy of the agenda, minutes, and any other relevant documents will be made available to the media upon request, subject to the usual publication procedures.
- Media representatives are expected to behave professionally during meetings, not interrupting proceedings or engaging in disruptive behaviour.

7. Crisis Communication

- In the event of a crisis or emergency situation involving the Parish Council, the Chair of the Parish Council will coordinate a response, consulting with relevant authorities as necessary.
- The Parish Council will aim to respond promptly and effectively to the media to ensure accurate information is communicated and to prevent the spread of misinformation.
- A crisis communication plan will be developed by the Parish Council to address various emergency scenarios and outline the process for managing media inquiries during a crisis.

8. Review and Amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Parish Council to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Any amendments to the policy must be approved by the Parish Council.

Date of policy:

Approving committee: Full Council

Date of committee meeting: 13 May 2025

Policy version reference:

Supersedes: [Name of old policy and reference]

Policy effective from: 12 May 2026
Date for next review: May 2027