

Berkeley Town Council
Media Policy
Dated 8th December 2014

Introduction

1. Berkeley Town Council ("the Council") is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decisions and actions
2. The Council may communicate with those whose work involves gathering material for editorial publication in print, broadcast and electronic form (e.g. researchers, journalists, reporters, photographers, editors of newspapers and magazines, camera or sound operators and crew of TV and radio programmes) ("the Media") to publicise its business decisions and actions. The Council may require the media to produce a UK press card.
3. Where information is not available via the Council's publication scheme the Council shall endeavour to assist the media with enquiries about the Council's functions, decisions and actions.
4. This policy explains how the Council, its councillors and staff will work with the media to meet the above

Legal Restrictions

5. This policy is subject to the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 amended by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Council's standing orders. Relevant standing orders referenced to or explained in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.
6. The Council, its councillors and staff cannot disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure of information is prohibited by law. Some but not all of the relevant obligations that councillors are subject to are contained in the Council's code of conduct, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

Meetings

7. The meetings of the Council, its committees and sub-committees are open to the public unless they resolve that their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution or if standing orders for certain sub-committees do not permit attendance of the public. In accordance with its standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council, its committees or sub-committees and joint committees if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.
8. Where meetings include time for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders
9. The Council's standing orders provides that a person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he is present at the meeting of a parish council or its committees but otherwise may:
 - a) film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting;
 - b) use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later;
 - c) report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.
10. In advance of meetings of the Council, its committees, sub committees and joint committees, newspapers, news agencies or organisations that collect news for sound and TV broadcast are entitled, on payment of postage or other necessary charges, to copies of the agenda and necessary supporting papers. The accredited representatives of newspapers, news agencies or organisations that collect news for sound and TV broadcast shall be given reasonable facilities for taking their report of a meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense. This is confirmed in the Council's standing orders.

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Interviews, statements and articles

11. The media shall contact the Council's Chairman or Clerk if they want to (i) interview councillors or staff about its business decision and actions or (ii) obtain a verbal or written statement from the Council about its business decisions and actions.
12. Any verbal or written statement given by the Council's Chairman or Clerk to the media represents the corporate position and views of the Council, not the individual views of its councillors or staff held in their official capacity.
13. An interview by the media with councillors or staff in their official capacity about the Council's business decisions and actions requires the Council's prior written consent. In any such interview, the media cannot ask about the personal views of the councillors or staff in their private capacity. Councillors and staff cannot communicate their personal views about the Council's business decisions and actions, other than the views they hold in their official capacity. Councillors and staff are not permitted to misrepresent the corporate position and views of the Council, or to damage the reputation of others in the Council or the Council itself.
14. The Council's Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to give an interview, provide a verbal or written statement to the media or publish an article using the media about its business decisions and actions.
15. Councillors and staff, other than the Clerk in accordance with paragraph 12, cannot in their official capacity, provide verbal or written statements to the media, or write articles for publication using the media about the Council's business decisions and actions without the Council's prior written consent. Councillors and staff cannot communicate their personal views about the Council's business decisions and actions, other than the views they hold in their official capacity. Councillors and staff are not permitted to misrepresent the corporate position and views of the Council, or to damage the reputation of others in the Council or the Council itself.
16. If councillors or staff, in their private capacity, provide verbal or written statements or interviews to the media or write articles for publication using the media about the Council's business decisions or actions, any personal views must be expressed in their private capacity. Personal views held in their official capacity cannot be communicated, councillors are not permitted to use their title Councillor and staff are not entitled to use their job title