Ewyas Harold Group Parish Council policy for dealing with the Press and Media

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedure for dealing with media enquiries. The Council welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and understands that it plays an important role in the democratic process. The media can be a useful conduit for promoting the Council and a good working relationship should be formed.

Contact with the media

On 8th July 2025 the Parish Council agreed that the Chairman or Vice-chairman, in consultation with the Clerk (particularly if the issue is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings) should be the main point of contact for approaches from the media. All statements made must reflect the Council's opinion, letters on behalf of the Parish Council for publication by newspapers or other media should always be submitted by the Clerk.

Hints for dealing with enquiries

If anyone other than the Chairman/Vice-chairman is approached regarding a media enquiry that person should not make a comment, or be drawn into conversation. Make a holding statement and try to find out what the call is about. Contact the Chairman/Vice-chairman and pass on details.

Before making a comment it is advisable to gather your thoughts and make some notes. Never say anything that you would not wish to see in print or repeated on air – there is no such thing as 'off the record'. Make it clear whether you are expressing your own thoughts or those of the Council. Do not answer with 'no comment' as it can sound suspicious. Issues should be presented clearly, fairly and as simply as possible, although Councils should not oversimplify the facts, issues or arguments.

How to write a press release?

The press release can be the cornerstone to getting any media coverage.

- The press release should be no longer than two sides of A4.
- The most important aspects of the release should come first, followed by other points in order of descending importance.
- The Parish Council contact details should be at the end of the press release.

Apart from briefings about future matters all press releases should answer the following questions.

- What happened? (What will happen?)
- Where has it happened? (Where will it happen?)
- Why has it happened? (Why is it happening?)
- When has it happened? (When will it happen?)
- How has it happened?

The press release must be presented in an easy to read format, please remember that people working in the media are very busy and working towards tight deadlines.

Information routinely available

The Council has produced a publication scheme which sets out what information is available to the public and where to get it. Agendas, reports and minutes will be available at least 3 clear days before a full council or committee meeting on request to the Clerk. The Council reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information, for example concerning commercial transactions, legal advice or

personal information about staff etc. Confidential documents, exempt minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be subject to legal proceedings, the Clerk should be consulted and advice sought if necessary.

If a councillor wishes to make a statement in his or her own right as a local resident it must be made clear that the opinions given are their own and not necessarily those of the Council. Councillors should not sign letters/statements using the title ‘Parish Councillor’. However if you are approached by the media because of your role as a parish councillor, you must refer them to the Chairman/Vice-Chairman.

Reviewed: 12th May 2026