

PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Reference	SNTC/AD014	Adopted by	Full Council
Prepared by	C Robson (Town Clerk)	Adopted date	31/01/23
Monitored by	Deputy Town Clerk	Minute reference	TC-139-22/23
Monitoring Review	Every four years	Review date	January 2027

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 St Neots Town Council welcomes enquiries from the Press & Media and recognises that our relationship with the press helps us communicate with residents. The Council recognises the need for this, and this 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 Council's approach to the media should be:

- Open and honest
- Proactive
- Responsive and timely

There are two types of press release:

1. Official Council Releases
2. Councillor Press Releases

2. OFFICIAL COUNCIL RELEASES

- 2.1 An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole, this will be written by an Officer and issued by the Town Clerk. It will be non-party political and include a quote from the relevant Councillor(s). This is usually the Chairperson of the Council or a Committee Chairperson.

3. COUNCILLOR PRESS RELEASES

- 3.1 Councillor's press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. This release may or may not be political and should not include the name of a Council Officer, or a Council telephone number or email as a point of contact. It would be beneficial for copies of intended releases, especially those of a factual nature, to be provided to the Town Clerk. Councillors seeking advice can either contact the Town Clerk or Deputy Clerk.

4. OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE PROTOCOL

- 4.1 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 activity to which the release relates. These will be issued by the Town Clerk

- 4.2 All official Council press releases are to be issued on a template provided by the Town Clerk. This template will include the Town Council logo.
- 4.3 Official press releases will not identify the political party or group affiliation of any Member(s) quoted in the release.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 In the years when elections occur, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election, Officers will issue no releases quoting Council Members. During this time any quotes will be from Officers. – [See section 6](#)
- 4.6 The role of Officers is to advise and provide support and advice to Council members in their communication activities. Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of any **councillor press releases** and any Editors Letters to the media.
- 4.7 Council Member releases must not use the Town Council's logo or use the Council or an Officer as a point of contact in any Councillor press release.
- 4.8 Officers and Council Members must act reasonably and responsibly, in line with the Council's adopted Officer and Member Protocol.

5. [SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA](#)

- 5.1 Unless a Councillor has been specifically authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- 5.2 When speaking to members of the public, unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear that they are expressing a personal view.
- 5.3 The Clerk and Deputy Clerk, or designated officers relating to specific projects are authorised to speak to the media when asked for comment or background information. The information given will be factual and accurate and any comments will be non-party political and represent the agreed view of the Council. If the Council has not taken an agreed view of the matter concerned, the press will be directed to a relevant Councillor for personal comment.

6. [ELECTIONS AND PURDAH](#)

- 6.1 The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity contains guidance for providing publicity for Members and for publicity around elections. The code makes it clear that Council resources should not be used on publicising individual Members unless it is relevant to the particular position they hold in the Council.
- 6.2 In the years when elections occur, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election ("Purdah"), Officers will issue no releases quoting Council Members. During "Purdah" any quotes will be from Officers only.



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7. ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 1972 requires that all agendas, reports and minutes be sent to the media on request, prior to the meeting. The Council has adopted a policy welcoming and setting out guidance for attendance of public and media at Council meetings.

8. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 8.1 This policy is subject to the councils statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Councils Standing Orders. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.