

# **DEVAUDEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

## **PRESS & MEDIA POLICY**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within Devauden Community Council (DCC) for working with the press and media, and deals with the relationship between DCC and the media. The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

Some aspects of the Code are relevant to this policy:-

- “Any publicity describing the Council's policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation or both.”
- “Publicity touching on issues that are controversial, or on which there are arguments for and against the views or policies of the Council should be handled with particular care. Issues must be presented clearly, fairly and as simply as possible, although councils should not oversimplify facts, issues or arguments.”
- “Publicity should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards.”
- “Local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.”

### **2 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

2.1 When responding to approaches from the media, the Chair of the Council should be the authorised contact with the media in consultation with the Clerk.

2.2 Statements made must reflect the Council's opinion.

2.3 Other Councillors can talk to the media but must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given are their own and not necessarily those of the Council.

2.4 Caution should be exercised when submitting letters to the editor for publication in newspapers. There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other

correspondents. However, such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks.

2.5 Letters representing the views of the Council should only be issued by the Clerk following agreement by the Council. At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of the Council.

### **3 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS .**

3.1 The Local Government Act 1972 requires that all agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request, prior to the meeting.

3.2 Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the Clerk and Chair.

### **4 ELECTIONS**

4.1 The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity contains guidance for providing publicity for councillors around elections. The code makes it clear that Council resources should not be used for publicising individual councillor's unless it is relevant to the particular position they hold in the Council.

4.2 The Council will not quote any Councillor in a news release or involve them in proactive publicity events during the election period, regardless of whether or not they are standing for election..

### **5 PRESS RELEASES**

5.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue.

5.2 Any Councillor may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Clerk following agreement by the Council in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section one are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

### **6 NOTICES**

6.1 Agendas and minutes of meetings will be on the Council's website

6.2 The Council's website will be used to convey information on matters of interest and latest news and will be updated regularly by the Clerk.

6.3 The Council notice boards will be used for the advertising of agendas, minutes and other council information.

## **7 URGENT SITUATIONS**

7.1 In the case of an urgent letter or press release being required in advance of a Council meeting, this may be issued by the Clerk with the agreement of the Chair of the Council.