

Sandwich Town Council Procedure for Communication with the Media

Communication with the media is particularly important. The media broadcast information and have a considerable influence on opinion. It is therefore important for Sandwich Town Council to get the right message across and minimise the risk of misunderstanding and misinformation. The following steps should be taken when approached by the media:

Councillors & Staff Should:

- Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organisation and, if available, the anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast.
- The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. The Chairman and Town Clerk should be made aware of any contact as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. At the most, a call should be returned within a half-day by the Town Clerk or Chairman.
- Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. Then follow-up by contacting the Town Clerk to report this communication.
- Do not offer speculations or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands your responses. Provide your phone number and/or e-mail address for follow-up questions.
- Councillors shall not, in their official capacity, provide oral or written statements or written articles to the press, other media and/or third party on behalf of the Council.
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are 1) legal issues, 2) personnel issues, 3) questions that involve council integrity, such as ethics, or 4) emergency situations. Refer all matters to the Town Clerk/Chairman.
- Any information regarding staff should be referred to the Town Clerk/Chairman. Only public information may be provided without the employee's written approval. Public information is the following: verification of employment, name of job title/position, full or part-time status, office contact details.
- The council is a single corporate body and the decisions of the council are the responsibility of the council as a whole, all councillors and staff must remember this.

Issuing Press Releases

- Whenever requested to do so by resolution of the full council the Town Clerk's office can issue a press release to the media with information on the actions and decisions of the council. Any written press release will be checked by both the Town Clerk and the allocated Communication Officer (currently the Assistant Town Clerk).