



Press & Media Policy

Preamble

This policy applies on those occasions when Woodbridge Town Council, as a body corporate, is asked for a statement, a comment or information from the media, or, as a body corporate, issues a press release, or information to factually clarify/correct other comments published in the media.

“Media” is defined as – any activity claiming to report on Woodbridge Town Council, (including social media platforms which allow others to comment on posts).

This policy does not, and is not intended to, apply when individual Councillors are contacted directly by the media for a personal comment/statement nor when individual Councillors contact the media with a personal statement. In such cases it should be made clear that is the individual’s own opinion/comment, not that of Woodbridge Town Council.

Policy Statement

Woodbridge Town Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers/provides information and takes decisions. As a Town Council we will therefore proactively seek opportunities to publish information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what Woodbridge Town Council is doing.

Procedures

Note in all instances in these procedures

- (i) When the Mayor is unavailable the Deputy Mayor will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities.
- (ii) When the Town Clerk is unavailable the Deputy Town Clerk will take on any of the specified tasks and responsibilities.

1. Requests from the Media

- 1.1 All staff should make the Mayor and/or the Town Clerk aware of all approaches from the media for interviews, statements or information.
- 1.2 Any request from the media will be discussed by the Mayor and Town Clerk and then forwarded to the most appropriate person - Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair or Vice-Chair, Town Clerk or combination of those people to make a response on behalf of Woodbridge Town Council.
- 1.3 Prior to its release, the Mayor and Town Clerk should be made aware of the content of any response.

1.4 It is not a requirement to respond to any request from the media for comment, particularly without having established the full facts surrounding their enquiry.

2. Response to Media Articles, Published Letters, Social media.

2.1 Every situation must be carefully assessed and, in many cases, a corporate response will not be appropriate.

2.2 Anyone seeing an article / item and thinking a corporate response may be needed should inform the Mayor and the Town Clerk.

2.3 In assessing whether or not a corporate response is appropriate the following will be considered:

- Is the article / item in question factually accurate?
- Is the article / item expressing a personal view – and if so is that clearly stated?
- Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?

2.4 Any potential corporate response shall be in line with section 1.2 and 1.3 of this policy.

3. Media Releases

3.1 The Town Clerk, Mayor and Committee Chairs will identify issues and stories that have the potential to be interest to the public.

3.2 The Town Clerk will draft corporate media releases consulting with the Mayor and Committee Chairs or any individual Councillor as appropriate.

3.3 An information copy of the final corporate media release will be sent to the Mayor and any consulted Councillor who is quoted in the text. Councillor not consulted will not be named in any media release.

3.4 Corporate media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor.

3.5 A copy of the corporate media release will be posted on Woodbridge Town Council's website and appropriate social media.

3.6 A copy of the corporate media release will be sent to Councillors and staff.

4. Media Training

4.1 Opportunities will be made for all Councillors and the Town Clerk to attend media-related training.

5. Decision Making

5.1 Woodbridge Town Council's Standing Orders (No 17) refer to relations with the press / media and the Town Council's policy - this media and publicity policy and procedures is the relevant policy.

5.2 Any decision about the content of corporate media releases or information to be supplied to the media or any response to any media item shall be in line with section 1.2 and 1.3 of this policy. (This delegation complies with the legislative restriction that an individual Town Councillor cannot make a decision on behalf of the Council.)

6. Social Media Policy

6.1 Social media accounts operated by Woodbridge Town Council will be used to help keep local residents, businesses, interested parties and visitors to the town informed of important Town Council related news, events and updates.

6.2 The accounts will be managed by the Town Clerk on behalf of Woodbridge Town Council who will seek to ensure that any legal obligations or best practice guidelines are adhered to.

6.3 Members of the public can expect social media updates covering some, or all, of the following:

- Alerts such as news, publications, events, publicity campaigns, Council/Committee meetings and new content on our other digital channels
- Invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which we are consulting
- Information about or from our partners or other local groups about what they're doing
- Occasional live coverage of events

6.4 Woodbridge Town Council may follow, subscribe and post on social media accounts of other users and groups. This does not imply endorsement of any kind.

6.5 Individual Councillors may use their personal accounts to post on others' accounts (as long as they comply with policy to make clear it's their personal opinion)

6.6 Woodbridge Town Council's accounts will be updated and monitored during working hours only and will be non-political. Political posts will be removed and Woodbridge Town Council will not engage on issues of party politics at any time.

6.7 Inappropriate language or anything that might contravene [libel](#), [defamation](#), [copyright](#) or [data protection laws](#) will be removed.

- 6.8 Online social media sites may occasionally be unavailable and Woodbridge Town Council accepts no responsibility for lack of service.
- 6.9 Feedback and ideas are welcomed from all sections of the community and Woodbridge Town Council will endeavour to join the conversation where possible. However, it may not be possible to reply individually to all messages.
- 6.10 Emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant persons.

Approved – Town Council – 20.09.23.

Review – Annually.