PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted at the **22nd October 2025** meeting of Eastleigh Town Council.

Subsequent amendments agreed as follows:

Version	Owner	Date Approved	Minute Ref	Action?	Website updated	Next Review
V1 – 2025-26	Town Council	22/10/2025	28/25/1		Yes	

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear rules and procedures for both Councillors and Officers of the Council when interacting with the Press and Media, to ensure the Council operates professionally, consistently, and transparently.

All Councillors and Officers must comply with the principles stated in this policy at all times, including when using social media (e.g., Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], Instagram). Failure to adhere to this policy may result in action under the Council's Code of Conduct or other appropriate procedures.

This policy provides the standards of behaviour and communication required when handling Press and Media relations. Councillors and Officers are required to follow these standards when conducting the business of the authority, acting in their elected/appointed capacity, or representing the Council in any way.

Clerk and Officers of the Council

The Clerk is authorised to receive all communications from the Press and Media and to issue official press statements on behalf of the Council.

In the absence of the Clerk, media communications will be handled by the Deputy Clerk and Chair. If both the Clerk and Chair are unavailable, enquirers will be referred to the Vice Chair and Deputy Clerk, who will agree who will act as spokesperson under this policy.

All communications issued by the Clerk must relate to the stated business, day-to-day management, or adopted policy of the Council. The Clerk is not authorised to speculate on matters not formally

considered by the Council. Where such questions arise, the enquirer should be referred to the Council as appropriate.

No other officer of the Council may represent the council to the Press or Media on any matter affecting the Council or its business unless expressly authorised by the Clerk/Deputy Clerk or Chair.

Councillors

Councillors must not disclose confidential information. This includes any matter discussed under confidential items on Council or Committee agendas, or any matter covered in private briefings.

Councillors must act with integrity when representing or acting on behalf of the Council. If the media wish to discuss an issue that is or may be subject to legal proceedings, legal advice must be sought before any response is made.

When speaking or providing written material to the Press or Media, Councillors should make clear in what capacity they are speaking — for example, as Chair of the Council or as an individual resident.

When speaking in a personal capacity, Councillors must not use the title "Councillor" or refer to their Council position, as this implies the statement reflects Council policy.

If a Councillor communicates with the Press or Media on behalf of the Council, they are encouraged to consult with the Clerk in advance, and a copy of the communication must be sent to the Clerk.

Councillors should exercise caution when approached by the Press or Media for comments on sensitive or controversial issues. If uncertain about the Council's position on a matter, they must state that they are not certain and advise the Press to contact the Clerk.

While Councillors are entitled to express personal views, they must make it clear when such views do not represent those of the Council. Once the Council has adopted a policy, Councillors are expected to respect that decision in public communications.

It is acceptable to state disagreement with a decision made in an open meeting, but Councillors must not use the Press or Media to undermine Council policy.

Councillors must not raise issues relating to the conduct or capability of Officers in meetings held in public or before the Press.

Dealing with the Press

When dealing with the Press verbally, members and officers should:

- Be fully informed and certain of the facts

- Ensure that their comments accurately reflect agreed Council policy
- Remain calm and professional
- Avoid any statement that could bring the Council, its Councillors, or staff into disrepute
- Avoid making libellous or slanderous statements

Social Media

In their use of social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram), Councillors and Officers must:

- Observe the Council's Code of Conduct
- Refrain from disclosing confidential information
- Avoid posting comments that could be seen as bullying, discriminatory, or defamatory
- Clearly state when their views are personal and not Council policy

The Council follows the NALC Social Media Policy Guidelines (August 2024) Social Media Policy Guidelines for guidance, and Councillors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Local Government Association's guidance on handling online abuse.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Facilities will be provided, when requested, for members of the Press who are formally accredited to attend and take notes of proceedings. Accreditation is granted by the Clerk and is available to recognised journalists, reporters, or correspondents representing recognised media outlets, including print, online, radio, or television. Freelance journalists may also be accredited if they can demonstrate a regular publishing record or affiliation with a recognised media organisation.

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Press and Public may be excluded from meetings during discussion of confidential matters, as permitted by relevant legislation.

Crisis Communications

In the event of a major incident or emergency affecting the Council or local area, all media communications will be coordinated by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk. The Clerk may liaise with the Principal Authority as necessary. Councillors must ensure that any public comments accurately represent the Council's agreed position and do not undermine Council policies.

Data Protection and Privacy

Councillors and Officers must not record conversations or communications with members of the public, Press or Media without their consent. All personal data must be processed in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Council's Data Protection Policy.