

Press/Media Policy 2026

Utilising the media is one avenue in which the Council can advise the community or stakeholders about relevant issues. However, it is important to use this avenue wisely to ensure the message is consistent. This policy/procedure details how Councillors and staff are required to respond to media enquiries or comments. By conducting all media liaison via a central point of contact, the Parish Council will be able to oversee media issues. By limiting the number of official spokespeople, the Council has a better opportunity to provide a consistent message.

Aims:

South Petherton Parish Council aims to build and maintain a positive reputation and will have a proactive approach to dealing with the media with enquiries being dealt with, wherever possible, within two working days. This approach will ensure an open and transparent approach.

Objectives:

- 1) To improve residents' understanding of the work of the Council and to provide public information.
- 2) To enhance the reputation of South Petherton Parish Council by promoting and celebrating success and the achievements of the Council and its partners.
- 3) To ensure a co-ordinated response from a single point of communication, the Clerk (or Deputy in their absence).
- 4) Reduce the risk of negative publicity resulting from non-response to enquiries.
- 5) To defend the Council from unfounded criticism by ensuring the public are properly informed of all relevant facts.
- 6) To have regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority publicity.

Policy Statement:

- 1) All media contact should be conducted subject to availability and in the order of the Clerk in the first instance, then the Chairman or the Chairmen of the various Committees.
- 2) The Chairman and Clerk are the official spokespersons for the Parish Council, unless authority for a particular matter is delegated.

Responding to Media Enquiries:

- When an enquiry is made by any media outlet, it is to be directed to the Clerk who will undertake any research necessary to assist her/him to make an informed, considered and timely response. If a Chairman of a Committee is contacted, only the decision of the corporate body should be conveyed.

- In instances where the nature of the media enquiry is deemed by the Clerk to be of a technical nature and/or of low risk, the staff may direct the enquiry to the Deputy Clerk, or Chairman to respond.
- In all media enquiries consideration needs to be given to the information being disclosed in relation to:
 - 1) GDPR and the Council's Data Protection policy
 - 2) Confidentiality
 - 3) Freedom of Information
 - 4) The relevant Council Policy
- The Council takes the protection of personal data seriously and is committed to protecting this information in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation, as detailed in the Council's policy.
- The Council will not give out personal data without ensuring that the necessary consent has been obtained.
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity: must be respected at all times, when dealing with any form of media. The Council shall not publish any material which in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to support a political party.

Making Private Statements

- It is important for Councillors and staff to distinguish between instances where they are called upon to comment through the media in an official or private capacity.
- Enquiries where a staff member is asked to give an opinion or statement of a political and/or policy nature it should be referred to the Clerk.
- Councillors and staff should ensure that interviews on a private basis are restricted to comments, personal insights or views on matters. It is important that Councillors emphasise that matters are purely their personal view, not directly related to the Council policy or an employee's work and should not be based on any information that is not in the public domain.
- The Clerk should be informed of any radio or television interviews/statements/comments made by Councillors so that they can be aware of the situation.

Approved May 2026

To be Reviewed May 2027