

Introduction

Slaugham Parish Council welcomes enquiries from the Press and Media. The Council recognise a healthy relationship with the Press and Media is important in conveying information to the local community.

Document Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council to ensure that Slaugham Parish Council are seen to communicate in a transparent and professional manner. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

Legislation

This policy is subject to the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014 and Councils Standing Orders.

The Press and Media are permitted to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees unless legislation suggests otherwise. Recording and reporting on meetings is subject to Council's Broadcasting, Recording and Filming Policy.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Clerk will act as the press officer and point of contact for Slaugham Parish Council. Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk. Any member or employee who is approached by the Press & Media for any matter relating to Slaugham Parish Council should direct the enquiry to the Clerk.

Members can make their own statements expressing their personal opinion relating to local issues. However, Members must make it clear that any opinion expressed is their own personal view, not that of the Council and should be recorded as such.

The Clerk and Members must not disclose confidential information to the media including any item discussed under confidential at a meeting. When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made. There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example, to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced. All correspondence must come from the Clerk. All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Clerk. Members should be aware that any Council related information held on their personal devices can be the subject to such a request. During an election year, the Clerk will not normally make any statement or issue a press release during Purdah (from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day following the election). In the absence of the Clerk, the Administrator will act as the Press Officer.