

Aims:

Louth Town 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 which is helpful to the media and is positive and honest.

Objectives:

To improve residents' understanding of the work of the council and to provide public information.

To enhance the reputation of Louth Town Council by promoting and celebrating success and the achievements of the council and its partners.

To ensure a co-ordinated response from a single point of communication, the Town Clerk.

Reduce the risk of negative publicity resulting from non-response to enquiries.

To defend the council from unfounded criticism by ensuring the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts.

Adhere to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority publicity.

Roles and Responsibilities: The council's policy is to deal with all media enquiries centrally through the town clerk. This will ensure there is a consistent message given. Any statements given must not be party political.

Councillors: All elected members should be sensitive to the fact that they are perceived to be speaking on behalf of the council. If they are writing or saying something that is not in accordance with council policy they should make it clear it is their view and not the council's. The town clerk should be informed if councillors do make a statement so it does not come as a surprise.

Privacy: All matters discussed in private must remain confidential and should not be leaked in any form to the media. (Notes taken when the council is in committee must be handed in and mobile phones must be switched off.) Disciplinary action will be considered if councillors are found to have "leaked" any confidential information.

Mayoral Publicity: Groups wishing to invite the Mayor to an event will be invited to fill in an agreed form, which will be available in paper form and also on the internet. A monthly schedule of mayoral activities will be made available for the media.

Radio and Television interviews: If appearing on camera, councillors and staff must look clean and tidy so as not to bring the council, and the town, into disrepute. All elected members should be sensitive to the fact that they are perceived to be speaking on behalf of

the council. If they are saying something that is not in accordance with council policy they should make it clear it is their view and not the council's. Out of courtesy the town clerk should be informed of any radio or television interviews.

Management of Negative Publicity: It is important this is done well and points adhered to. Inaccurate reporting in the media to be discussed by the town clerk and Mayor and councillors invited to give their views where appropriate before a course of action is decided on.

Social Media: Councillors, and staff, should remember that all social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Blogging sites, Podcasts, You Tube, Skype, Flickr, web applications, wikis and hybrid sites are a public forum and that they are personally responsible for the content published. No defamatory, derogatory or offensive comments should be posted on the internet about colleagues or matters which have come in front of the council. Anyone acting in contravention of this protocol may be subject to misconduct and disciplinary action.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity: These must be respected and adhered to at all times when dealing with any form of media. The town council shall not publish any material which in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to support a political party.

Embargoes: To be used where deemed necessary and all press releases should carry the embargoed logo on the top sheet. The town clerk, the Mayor and members will convene a meeting to decide on a course of action should any media break the council's stated embargo

Press Conferences: Can be convened in the event of a major incident or an emergency in the town. Any press conferences held need to be pre-planned so that individuals know they will speak and know what they will say. All press conferences should be run to an agreed framework.