CLIVE PARISH COUNCIL PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

Adopted: 16 July 2020
Last reviewed: July 2026
Next review: July 2027

Introduction

This policy aims to establish a protocol for effective communication and dissemination of information to Members, the press, and members of the public.

Purpose

1. Clive Parish Council ("the Council") is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions, and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, please contact the Council's Clerk.
2. All communication will be conveyed in an open and straightforward manner. The Clerk to the Council is the Proper Officer of the Parish Council and is responsible for all formal communication between the Parish Council, the press, and members of the public. In the event of the Clerk being unavailable, the Chair will fulfil this role as a temporary measure.
3. This policy does not seek to unnecessarily regulate Councillors in their private capacity.
4. The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").

Press Policy

The Parish Council is keen to develop a good rapport and work proactively with the media, whilst ensuring that confidentiality and consent are maintained at all times. The policy below will explain how the Council may work with the media to meet Council objectives (see "Purpose", above) in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that may apply.

Legal requirements and restrictions

1. This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are 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 General Data Protection Regulations 2018, other legislation which may apply, and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Council's Financial Regulations and relevant Standing Orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.

2. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or disclose information which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's Standing Orders, under contract, or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

Procedure for working with the media

This policy outlines the procedures and arrangements for working with the media (including the press), and what Councillors or the Clerk should do if approached by the media, or if they are involved in a situation that will attract media attention. The policy also covers the Parish Council's use of Social Media.

1. On receipt of a request from the press or other media for a statement, the person receiving the request (Clerk or any Councillor) will advise the body making the request that a statement will be considered and issued shortly.

2. On receipt of a request the journalist or other caller should be asked to make clear who they are working for, and what is the exact nature of their enquiry. Further, they should be asked where any information they elicit will be published.

3. The Council is under no obligation to provide a statement.

4. Only the Clerk and/or the Chair shall provide the press with a verbal or written statement – ideally this statement would be after liaison with each other as a minimum and may involve input from other Councillors too.

5. The exception to (4.) above would be if the Chairman or the Parish Council at a Parish Council meeting had delegated a specific Parish Councillor(s) to make the response on behalf of the Council.

6. Under no circumstances must anything of a confidential nature be disclosed to the press or other media.

7. The response to the press or other media should be the view of the Parish Council as a whole, not the view of an individual Councillor or the Clerk. However, an individual may give a direct quote as long as they attribute that quote to their name and make it clear that is their view and not that of the Parish Council.

8. No response should be made that is in any way damaging to the interests or reputation of the Parish Council.

9. The Parish Council acknowledges the right of the media to obtain information from the Parish Council under the Freedom of Information Act. The Council will respond to such requests in accordance with the Act as laid out in Clive Parish Council's Freedom of Information policy.

   The Council will not release information that is exempted. Exemptions will be:
   (a) Personal data (see paragraph 10 below);
   (b) Confidential matters
   (c) Information likely to endanger the health or safety of a Councillor or Clerk or any other individual.

10. Data protection – The Council recognises that personal data (including photographs relating to a Councillor or Clerk) are protected under the Data Protection Act 2018 and this personal data will not be disclosed to the media without the consent of the person concerned.

11. If a request for information involves a conflict of interest for a Councillor or the Clerk, the Councillor or Clerk must declare his or her interest and avoid involvement with the matter.

12. This Policy will be reviewed at least annually by Full Council.

13. The Clerk should keep a record of all communications with the press or other media.

Meetings

1. A meeting of the Council and its Committees is open to the public, unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest, due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its Committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

2. Where a meeting of the Council and its Committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's Standing Orders.

3. The photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its Committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, etc.) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear, or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted, unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) the following two paragraphs apply.

4. The photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or Committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

5. Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or Committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

6. The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or Committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

7. The Council's Standing Orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a Sub-Committee.

Social Media Policy

Clive Parish Council realises that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership to sites such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc.

Why might the Parish Council use social media?

The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as possible, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information. The Parish Council's Community Engagement Policy recognises that different demographics may be reached through careful use of social media.

Any official Parish Council social media channels supplement the information published on their website.

- The Parish Council can remind people of important events and alert followers instantly to breaking news.
- The Parish Council can link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by other people.
- The Parish Council can better communicate with those using mobile devices.

Sharing information via other organisations' social media accounts

If the Parish Council does not have any official social media accounts set up, it may ask the admins of local social media accounts e.g. Clive Village, to share relevant Parish Council news with their followers. If the Clerk and Chairman agree that it is appropriate to share certain information in this way, the guidelines relating to the use of official accounts (see below) will apply. Following discussion with the Chairman, the Clerk shall have delegated authority to prepare content to be shared. In addition to this, any such posts **must**:

a) be preceded by the text: "Shared on behalf of Clive Parish Council"

b) include the following text: Please note that the Parish Council is not able to monitor or respond to any comments on this post. If you have any comments or require further information, please contact the Parish Council Clerk directly at [email address], or [Clerk phone number] (office hours only).

Use of Official Accounts

Clive Parish Council may decide to operate its own official social media accounts for the promotion of activities and events, and as a communication and broadcast tool. If it decides to do so, the following policies will apply.

Examples of acceptable corporate content are:

- Marketing campaigns
- Consultation documents
- News feed & emergency information
- Event listings

• Key dates
• Short debates & quick comments on hot topics and relevant news (discussion board)
• Polls and information gathering
• Useful links

The following outlines the limits of their use:

1. An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with approval from the Full Council.
2. Any official Parish Council social media pages will be monitored **periodically.**
3. Only staff and Councillors with delegated authority may use these accounts to post online, and access to the account is strictly limited. Any official Parish Council social media accounts will be monitored periodically by the duly authorised Councillor or member of staff (see Social Media Moderation Policy below).
4. Only authorised Councillors or staff are allowed to share links to the Council website, partner websites, 'Useful links' (e.g. local transport sites), links to other social media pages, local press and media national organisations, etc.
5. Only the Parish Clerk and the Councillor responsible for managing official social media accounts will have permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery.
6. All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's Data Protection (privacy) policies.
7. Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council's website.
8. Publicly posted comments and messages received on any of the Council's social media pages are the views of individuals and do not represent the views of the Parish Council.
9. Anyone who would like to request for something to be posted on the Parish Council's social media platforms should contact the Parish Clerk.
10. Any employee, Councillor, or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Parish Clerk aware as soon as possible.
11. If the Parish Council follows another social media account, this does not imply any kind of endorsement.
12. The Parish Council will not normally reply to direct messages on social media platforms (see Direct messages on social media networking platforms below). The Council asks that contact is made with the Parish Council Clerk using the contact form on the website, direct email, or phone.
13. Any posts on official social media accounts should be:
    - Timely and appropriate
    - Mindful of the audience
    - Accurate, without any spelling mistakes or typos
    - Factually correct and without personal opinion
    - Concise and not designed to promote a discussion (with the exception of specific community engagement activity e.g. an opinion poll).
    - In line with data protection

Social media moderation policy

Any official Parish Council social media pages will be reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserves the right to remove comments received on its official social media sites that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent, or offensive language, or that link to obscene or offensive material
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation, or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall
- Contain abusive language towards others, including any individual involved in the thread, other organisations, or the page administrator
- Constitute spam, or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication, or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, we reserve the right to block or prevent users from posting further comments to the Council's social media pages.

Personal Accounts on Social Media

Staff must use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment. The absence of explicit reference to a specific website or service does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no policy or guidelines exist, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If the Parish Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or confidential information is disclosed, it reserves the right to report the comment and request that it be removed.

Councillors are at liberty to set up personal social media accounts using any of the platforms available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should be aware of the need to present a professional image, and must not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary, or libellous nature should not be made, and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration, and colourful language.

Purdah

In the six-week run up to any UK election – local, general, Police and Crime Commissioner, etc., – Councils have to very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way as support for any political party or candidate. This period is known as "purdah", or "period of pre-election sensitivity". The Parish Council will continue to publish important service announcements using any

official social media accounts, but will monitor and potentially have to remove comments or posts if they are overtly party political.

Direct messages posted on social networking platforms

The Council's default position is that all formal requests, comments, enquiries, or complaints should be sent to the Parish Council using the Clerk's contact details on the website, rather than via social media platforms. As official Parish Council social media pages will be monitored **periodically** this will to ensure that no important messages are missed, and will also aid record management. If necessary and appropriate, the Council will endeavour to respond to messages received via social media platforms in a timely manner, however members of the public should be aware that direct messages on social media platforms will not be the quickest or most effective means of communicating with the Council, and in some cases messaging facilities may be disabled.

The Parish Council may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback. The Parish Council may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual corrections, but would generally take a cautious approach before getting involved in contentious issues.

The Parish Council reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the Parish community, and will delete any comments or posts on the official Council page that reference the Parish Council or members of the public in a way that is deemed to be abusive or offensive.