West Mersea
Town Council

Adopted: 03 September 2026
Next review: September 2027

PRESS & MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

- West Mersea Town Council ('the Council') is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decision and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, please contact the Council's Town Clerk.

- 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').

- This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements that apply.

Legal Requirements and restrictions

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 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

The Council's Financial Regulations and relevant Standing Orders in this policy are available via the Council's Publication Scheme. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is published 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.

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 for example, using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:

   a) The meeting has resolved to hold all or part of its meeting without the public present.

   b) Such activities disrupt the proceeding.

   c) Paragraphs 4 and 5 below 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 whilst the meeting is in session.

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 Councils 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.

Other communications with the media

- This policy does not seek to regulate Councillors in their private capacity.

- The Council's communications with the media may take one of three broad categories:

   a) Clarification of agreed Council policies, clarification of items on the agenda for the next Council meeting; progress reports on actions the Council has agreed to take. All such requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the Council shall be referred to the Town Clerk, or in their absence the Mayor.

   b) A request for a media comment at an event, whether organised by the Council or another party, at which the Mayor or Deputy Mayor has represented the Council. In such situations the Mayor (or Deputy) should make an appropriate statement to the media.

   c) A request for a media comment on a local situation which does not directly involve the Council, for example, an achievement such as a local person winning an Olympic gold medal or a tragedy such as a drowning or road traffic accident.

      In such circumstances the Mayor, or in their absence the Deputy Mayor, as the representative of the people of West Mersea, is the proper person to make an appropriate statement on behalf of the Council and the people of West Mersea.

- The Council's Town Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

- Subject to the obligations on Councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 5 above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, Councillors are free to communicate their position and views. If the views of Councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear.

- The Mayor/Deputy Mayor shall prepare a response to any request from the press or other media which will then be circulated to all Councillors to ensure they are aware of media interest. This may be done after the response is given to the media.