



St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council

Linda Ranger PSLCC FdA (Comm Gov) - Clerk & RFO

E-mail: clerk@ststepheninbrannel-pc.gov.uk

www.ststepheninbrannel-pc.gov.uk

Office 2, Brannel Room
22 Fore Street, St Stephen
St Austell, PL26 7NN
Tel: 01726 823003

Press & Media Policy¹

Introduction

St Stephen in Brannel 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.

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council to ensure that St Stephen in Brannel 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.

Governance

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 adopted Standing Orders.

Standing Order 22 states:

- Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.*
- The Proper Officer has been appointed as the media liaison contact on behalf of the Council. In accordance with the council's policy in respect to dealing with the press, public and/or other media, councillors shall not, in their official capacity, provide oral or written statements, letters or written articles to the press, public or other media.*

¹ Adopted by Full Council at the meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 under minute number FPC136/23. Due for review in May 2026

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.

Local media outlets will be provided on request with the agendas, reports and minutes of meetings, prior to them taking place, as required by the Local Government Act 1972.

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.

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).

Roles & Responsibilities

The Clerk will act as the press officer and point of contact for St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council or in their absence, the Assistant Clerk.

Requests for interviews, information or photographs from the media should be referred to the Clerk.

Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk.

Official statements from the Parish Council must be issued on a document bearing the Council's logo, include an appropriate title, be dated and contain the details of the person to contact for further information.

Statements made must reflect the minuted opinion of the Parish Council, where applicable.

Councillors may be approached directly by the media and can provide responses, making it clear that the views given are their own and not necessarily those of the Parish Council. Members should not claim to be commenting on behalf of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council recognises that councillors have private lives and may be approached by the media in relation to their roles outside of the Council. In this instance, members must make it clear that they are not commenting as an elected councillor or on behalf of the Parish Council.

Requests to take photographs of councillors or staff in relation to Council business must be agreed by the individual and in the case of staff, by the Clerk or, in the instance of the Clerk, the HR committee.

There is no out-of-hours media relations service, although councillors can be contacted outside of normal office hours as their contact details are available in the public domain. In extreme

circumstances, e.g. if the circumstances of the request will have an impact before the timescale allowed by the next available working hours, the Clerk should be contacted to liaise with the media if necessary.

The Parish Council should not pass comment on anonymous allegations or allegations about individual councillors or staff.

The Parish Council is open and accountable and should always explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific enquiry.

Members and staff must alert the Clerk as soon as a potentially positive or negative issue which may attract media interest becomes known. They should not wait until contact is made by the media.

As well as responding to media requests, the Parish Council will pro-actively issue news releases and distribute them to the relevant media. Press releases must be issued on a document bearing the Parish Council's logo, include an appropriate title, be dated and contain the details of the person to contact for further information.

Press releases wherever possible will include a quote from a councillor.

Releases will not publicise the personal activities of individual councillors or persuade the general public to hold a particular view.

Photographs may be issued with the news releases and captions must be included in the release. If photographs include councillors or staff, the previous clause will apply.

Press releases will be sent by email to the relevant media, displayed on the Parish Council website, on the Council's noticeboards and on the Council's social media sites.

Letters to the editor of a newspaper do not qualify as press releases and caution is advised when submitting a letter of this kind. If submitted by a councillor, it should state that they are acting as an individual and not as a councillor. It may be appropriate for the Parish Council to submit a letter on occasions, such as correcting factual errors. These letters should be factual and brief and should be signed by the Clerk only.

Press releases should be displayed in the news section of the website.

The Clerk will produce a quarterly column for the local Community Parish News, providing interesting and informative news about the Council, its members and any community issues which are linked to the Council. Ideas for inclusion in the article can be submitted to the Clerk by councillors and staff.

Priority is given on the Council's noticeboards to official Council documents, such as agendas, public notices, election information and legal issues affecting the Council. Where possible, the Council will display posters and information for community related issues.

The Council social media accounts aim to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the parish and promote the community in a positive way and all councillors and staff must have this aim in mind when posting information.

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.