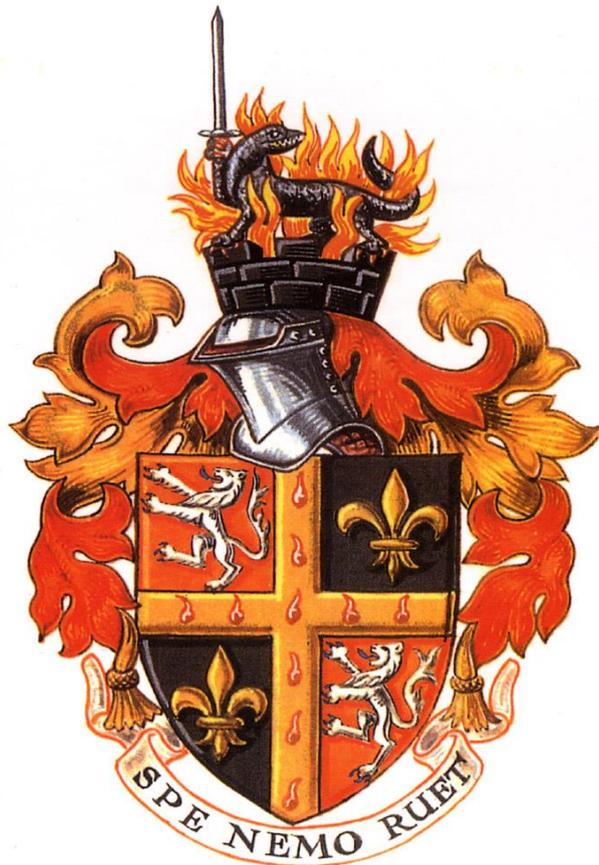


SPENNYMOOR TOWN COUNCIL



PRESS RELEASE PROTOCOL

Author of Policy:	Town Clerk
Date Effective From:	24 th May 2022
Policy Review: When & By Whom	12 th May 2022 Constitution Working Group
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In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document will be posted on the Council's Website www.spennymoor-tc.gov.uk and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Offices, Town Hall, Spennymoor. Costs are as per the publication scheme.

1. Introduction

The aim of the Protocol is to ensure that the Town Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner. The Council's approach to the media should be:

- Proactive
- Responsive and timely
- Informative
- Open, honest and with integrity.

2. Supporting documentation

The Protocol should be read in conjunction with the following documents, all of which are in the Members' Handbook.

- Members' Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Member Officer Protocol
- Employees and Members' Guide to internet and email facilities

3. Information

There are two types of press release:

1) **Official Council Press Releases**

An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole; it will be written by the Town Clerk and issued by their office. It is non-party political and should where possible include a quote from the relevant Lead Member or Chairman/Vice-Chairman of the relevant Committee. Any such press release must be agreed with the relevant Lead Member for the service area.

2) **Councillor Press Releases**

Councillors' press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible, or a nominated person in their party.

4. Press Release Protocol

The following forms the Protocol for Council Members and Officers.

- All official Council press releases will include a quotation from the relevant Lead Member or Chair/Vice-Chair of Committee. All official press releases are to be issued by the Town Clerk on the Town Council's letterhead.
- Official press releases will not identify the political party or group affiliation of any Member(s) quoted in the release.
- The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader Member for Council Policy and Infrastructure, is the first line of decision making in terms of what is newsworthy for official press releases, and shall make the final decision on whether a press release shall be issued.
- The Town Clerk has responsibility for checking and issuing all official Council press releases.
- In the years when elections occur, during the periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of Election ('Purdah'). The Town Clerk will issue no press releases quoting Council Members. During 'Purdah', any quotes will be from the Town Clerk if necessary.
- The role of the Town Clerk is to advise and provide support and advice to Council Members in their communications activities.
- Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of all Member press releases and any Editor's letters to the media.
- Council Member releases must not use the Town Council's letterhead or the Town Crest.
- Officers and Council Members must act reasonably and responsibly.

- Council Members are reminded that they must not mis-use Council resources (which include computer equipment) for political or other inappropriate purposes.
- Should the Council receive a Freedom of Information request on a topic on which there is correspondence (email or written) from or with Members, normally that correspondence would have to be disclosed, unless it was exempt. The fact that disclosure of the correspondence may prove embarrassing would not, of itself, prevent disclosure.
- In addition, care should be taken when processing personal data. The Data Protection Act 2018 prevents the use of personal information other than for the purposes for which it was supplied. Members should bear this in mind when using any personal data which may be supplied to them by their constituents. Members are also reminded that they should adhere to the Councils ICT security policy and the guidance on acceptable use of the internet and email.

In general, the Town Clerk will be responsible for interpretation of the Protocol but may be challenged on its interpretation by Members as they deem appropriate