Bures Hamlet Parish Council
Press and Media Policy

Introduction

This policy applies on those occasions when the Parish Council is asked for a statement, a comment or information from the media, or when it issues a press release, or information to factually clarify/correct other comments published in the media. Media is defined as any activity "reporting" on the Parish Council.

This policy does not, and is not intended to, apply when individual Councillors are contacted directly by the media for a personal comment or statement, nor when individual Councillors contact the media with a personal statement. In such cases it should be made clear that it is the individual's own opinion or comment, not that of the Parish Council.

In general, the Parish Clerk provides factual information on behalf of the Council. The Chair or the Vice Chair may be asked to provide details of the decisions that have been made at Council meetings. If a Councillor is unsure about the circumstances of a particular issue, he/she should contact the Parish Clerk before communicating with the media, including social media. The Parish Council has a separate policy covering the Use of Social Media.

Policy Statement

Bures Hamlet Parish Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers information and takes decisions. As a Parish Council we will therefore proactively seek opportunities to publish information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what the Parish Council is doing.

1. Requests from the Media

1.1 All members and staff should make the Parish Clerk aware of any approaches from the media for interviews, statements or information.

1.2 Any request from the media will be considered by the Parish Clerk and he/she will try to identify if the Council has already agreed a policy position on the subject. The Parish Clerk will then contact the Chair to agree a response on behalf of the Parish Council.

1.3 Prior to releasing a statement or giving an interview, the Parish Clerk and the Chair should agree bullet points to cover the broad content of any response. This may be supported by other, more detailed documents when appropriate.

2. Response to Media Articles, Published Letters, Online Comments, Tweets, Facebook items

2.1 Every situation must be carefully assessed, and, in many cases, a Parish Council response will not be appropriate.

2.2 Any member who sees an article or item and thinks that a Parish Council response may be appropriate should inform the Parish Clerk or the Chair.

2.3 In assessing whether or not a response is appropriate the following will be considered:

- Is the article or item in question factually accurate?
- Is the article or item expressing a personal view – and if so, is that clearly stated?
- Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?

2.4 Any potential response will be considered by the Parish Clerk and then forwarded to the Chair to prepare a draft response on behalf of the Parish Council.

2.5 Prior to releasing any response, the Parish Clerk and the Chair should agree the written content. This may be supported by other, more detailed documents when appropriate.

3. Media Releases

3.1 The Parish Clerk and Chair may identify issues and stories that have the potential to be of interest to the public.

3.2 The Parish Clerk will draft media releases in consultation with the Chair, or any individual Councillor, as appropriate.

3.3 An information copy of the final media release will be sent to the Chair and any Councillor who is quoted in the text.

3.4 Media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Parish Clerk following consultation with the Chair.

3.5 A copy of the media release will be posted on the Parish Council's website.

3.6 A copy of the media release will be emailed to Councillors.

4. Media training

4.1 Opportunities will be made for all Councillors and the Parish Clerk to attend media related training, if relevant and subject to funds.

5. Parish Council Website

5.1 The Parish Council website will be used to help keep local residents, businesses, interested parties and visitors to the village informed of important Parish Council related news, events and updates.

5.2 The Parish Council's website will have updates covering some or all of the following:

- Alerts such as news, publications, events, publicity campaigns, Council/Committee meetings
- Invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which we are consulting.

5.3 The Parish Council website will be updated and monitored during working hours only and will not be political. Political comments will be removed and the Parish Council will not engage on issues of party politics at any time.

5.4 Inappropriate language or anything that might contravene libel, defamation, copyright or data protection laws will be removed.

5.5 Feedback and ideas are welcomed from all sections of the community. Emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant persons.

Reviewed: 21st September 2026 -– next review September 2027