



## **TOCKWITH WITH WILSTROP PARISH COUNCIL PROTOCOL FOR OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASES & OTHER MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS**

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2001 outlines the criteria and guidelines for local authorities to consider when publishing information to the public. This document has been referred to when formulating this protocol. The Parish Council has powers to produce and circulate publicity regarding its functions and responsibilities.

*For the benefit of doubt, this policy includes all communications with:- newspapers, magazines, social media, tv, radio and all locally produced community news outlets i.e. community newsletters and magazines.*

The aim of this protocol is to ensure that the Parish Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner. This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Members Code of Conduct. All press releases will appear on the Parish Council website [www.tockwith.gov.uk](http://www.tockwith.gov.uk)

### **The main purpose, therefore, of all Parish Council produced press releases is:**

- To increase public awareness of the services provided by the Council and the functions it performs;
- To explain to electors and Council Tax payers the reasons for particular policies and priorities;
- In general, to improve local accountability.

It is particularly important, therefore, that Councillors and Clerk ensure that they do not contravene this requirement.

In general, in considering the subject areas in which publicity is to be issued, the following matters will be important:-

- i) The publicity should be relevant to the functions of the Parish Council.
- ii) It should not duplicate unnecessarily publicity produced by Central Government, another Local Authority or another Public Authority.
- iii) In areas where Central Government, another tier of Local Government or another Public Authority have the primary service or policy responsibility, local authorities should issue publicity only on matters that are directly related to their own functions.

### **To assist in this process, the following protocol has been agreed:**

- a) The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.
- b) The Clerk will consult the Chairman and Vice-Chairman before releasing press reports or comments, authorised by the Council, to the media.



- c) Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting. All official Council press releases are to be issued on a template provided by the Clerk. This template includes the Parish Council logo.
- d) At no time should any individual Councillor issue any press releases or information reports on behalf of the Parish Council, unless they have been formally delegated to do so.
- e) Any press release should contain the name of the Council, state whether the information is for immediate release or embargoed until a certain date, main title and then at the end, separate from the main body of the text, some background information to the matter and full contact details if the press need further information.
- f) A press release should have four W's – Why, Where, What and When. A press release concerning a planning issue should contain the application number, Case Officer, details of the proposals and how to make comments and where to send them i.e. the address of the Planning Authority to which responses should be sent and the deadline for responses. Additional information could include where to find details of the application and where more information can be found.
- g) Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- h) Press releases need to be objective at all times, concentrating on facts or explanation or both. They should not be opinion based. They need to be balanced, informative and accurate. In setting out the reasons for the Council's views, the material should not be constructed in such a way as to be seen as a prejudiced political attack.
- i) The role of the Clerk is to advise and provide advice and support to the Council in its' communication activities.

#### **Councillor correspondence to external parties**

- **All correspondence concerning the affairs of the Council will be prepared and sent by the Clerk, following agreed instructions by the Full Council.**

N.B. The Government Code of Recommended Practice states "*authorities should not mount publicity campaigns where the primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view in relation to petitions generally or on a specific proposal*"

The Parish Council is explicitly forbidden from using:

*"public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy."*

This protocol was reviewed and adopted by the Parish Council on 16th September 2020.....

Signed by: Chairman: Leeds a Pore Clerk Jay Richardson



## TOCKWITH WITH WILSTROP PARISH COUNCIL MEDIA/PRESS RELEASE

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Date press release issued: .....

TITLE .....

Text – to include Why.....  
Where .....  
What.....  
When .....

(Try to keep to 1 side of A4 for main message, even if additional info is on 2<sup>nd</sup> sheet)

In case of planning issues: –

- include application number and deadline for responses;
- how to make comments and where to send them;
- where to see application details;
- name of case officer and where more information is available from

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At end of text write ENDS