

Policy title: CS10 Media Policy



Policy Control

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Directorate / Departmental ownership:	Corporate Services / Corporate Planning and Policy
Officer responsible:	Regina Mackin
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Equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed by:	Colin Moffett Head of Corporate Policy
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1. Title of policy

The Media Policy sets out the Council's commitment to the central handling of media relations and supports best practice relating to any communication involving the media.

2. Statement

The Council applies this Policy to ensure that the Council's media communications are honest, transparent, balanced, clear and in keeping with the Council's corporate vision, values and strategic priorities and are undertaken in an effective, efficient and professional manner.

3. Aim

The aim of the Policy is to ensure a consistent approach to dealing with all media communications activity.

Our purpose in media relations is to:

- Build a strong image and identity for the Council and strengthen its reputation
- Improve citizens' awareness and understanding of the work of the Council
- Ensure information about our aims, objectives and services is targeted to and accessible by key stakeholders as highlighted under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- Invigorate local democracy and encourage and enable people to participate in the work of the Council
- Build up a relationship of trust and mutual understanding that will benefit both the Council and the media.

4. Scope

Council in any capacity, or who represents the Council in some way, including:

- All Elected Members
- All permanent staff and managers, full-time or part-time, at all levels
- Consultants, contractors or suppliers that may want to refer to the Council in their publicity material
- Staff working for the Council on secondments from other organisations or staff appointed jointly with another organisation
- Organisations that have entered into a legal agreement to carry out services on the Council's behalf.

Non-compliance of this policy by any member of staff may be deemed to be in breach of Council policy which may result in the appropriate disciplinary action being taken.

The Media Policy is implemented through the Press Office and the policy objectives are to:

- a) Generate and promote news and information on behalf of the Council
- b) Deal with queries from the media directly
- c) Organise Media Campaigns.

5. Related policies and legislation

- Bilingualism Policy and Procedure
- Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees
- Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure
- Corporate Brand Guidelines
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Scheme
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- NI Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75)
- Safeguarding Board (NI) Act 2011
- Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure
- UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018

6. Definitions

Definitions at Appendix I

7. Department and Officer responsible

Directorate / Department	Corporate Services / Corporate Planning and Policy
Officer(s) responsible for developing the policy	Regina Mackin Assistant Director, Corporate Planning and Policy

8. Policy approval process

Meeting	Date
Governance Committee	10 March 2015
Council Meeting	31 March 2015

9. Review Date

The policy will be reviewed in line with the Council's agreed policy review cycle i.e. every 4 years (as per Council's Equality Scheme commitment 4.31), or sooner to ensure it remains reflective of legislative developments.

10. Procedures and arrangements for monitoring the implementation and impact of the policy

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Media Policy Procedures (Reviewed March 2022)

11. Equality Screening

The policy has been screened and the outcome is that it not be subject to an EQIA (with no mitigating measures required)

12. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

The policy has been subject to rural needs impact assessment.

The following communication values will be explicit in all our communications activity. Through these, we will work to build a strong image and identity for the Council and strengthen its reputation.

- **Honesty** – we will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on any issue or news story.
- **Transparency and Openness** – we promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.
- **Balance** – information provided to the media will be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely
- **Clear and consistent** - We will use plain language that people understand, and take account of special communications needs. We will avoid jargon and use words that people identify with. Clarity of communication will be reinforced by consistent messages, consistent tone and consistent use of our corporate branding.
- **Accessible and approachable** - We will make sure people know how to get in touch with us, in ways that suit them and that they feel comfortable with. We will make it easier for people to tell us what they think.
- **Inclusive, involving, engaging** – We will make efforts to ensure that every member of society has an opportunity to find out about and comment on the work of the Council, and issues which affect them. This includes those individuals or groups who may be less easy to reach by usual means.
- **Impartiality** - All our communication will be free of political bias.
- **Effectiveness/Efficiency** – We make every effort to reply within the agreed timescale in an effective, efficient and professional manner.