



## Media Protocol

Adopted on: 1 December 2025

Review by: May 2026

### Introduction

1. Communication between Madeley Town Council and the local communities is vital for access to information and for local democracy. It promotes a positive image of the services, employees and councillors. The Town Clerk already works closely and directly with the media on a local basis and acts as the Town Council's press officer.
2. This document recognises the importance of the media to effective public communications and sets out to advise on the following:
  - the role of Councillors and the Clerk in media relations;
  - information on how media relations is managed within the Council;
  - contact details for further help and support.
3. This protocol is designed to help everyone to work more effectively together with the media and to achieve an efficient and timely response to media enquiries. The overall aim is to positively raise the profile of the Town Council and increase understanding of and engagement in its work and its impact at a local level.
4. This does not in any way affect the rights of a person, even if a local councillor, to express personal views. It is essential, however, that they are recognised as personal views and not necessarily those of the Town Council.

### Legal Requirement and Restrictions

5. This Policy is subject to the Town Council's obligations which are 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 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which are referenced in this Policy and available in the Town Council's Publication Scheme.
6. The Town Council cannot disclose confidential information or disclose information which is prohibited by law, court order, legislation, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restriction about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Town Council, a copy of which is available via the Town Council's Publication Scheme.

### Meetings

7. All meetings of the Town Council including committees are open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude the public because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to public interest due to the confidential nature of the business being discussed.
8. All meetings of the Town Council including committees include an opportunity for the public to speak, including the media, as outlined in the Town Council's Standing Orders.

9. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of any meeting of the Town Council including Committees which enables a person not at the meeting to see, hear or given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:
  - the meeting has been resolved to exclude the public or media from that part of the meeting
  - such recording disrupts the proceedings of the meeting
  - the meeting is reporting on a child or vulnerable adult unless a responsible adult given their permission
  - a person is giving a verbal running commentary whilst in the meeting or committee

### **Who speaks on behalf of the Town Council to the media?**

10. Clerk - The Clerk is the public relations officer of the Town Council and can issue statements of fact on behalf of the Council at any time.
11. Councillors - Councillors who hold particular positions may be the lead spokesperson on issues relating to their areas of responsibilities, as agreed by the Town Council. This relates not only to verbal quotes/briefings/interviews with the media, but also in media releases in most instances. All council media contact covering media releases, enquiries and media responses should be handled by the Clerk. Any statements and quotes given to or promoted to the media quoting a Councillor should be cleared by the Clerk & the Mayor. For any media enquiry that is not basic information the final response must be cleared by the Clerk or the Mayor.

With the agreement of the Mayor, Town Councillors may give interviews and speak on behalf of the Town Council. All council media statements should be logged and issued by the Clerk. All Councillors who are contacted directly by the media without advance knowledge, or agreement of the Clerk & Mayor, should redirect the query to the Clerk in the first instance.

As a general rule, in order to protect yourself and the Council, you should only be speaking to the media with advance notice, preparation and most importantly, authorisation from the Clerk & the Mayor. Councillors should ever:

- publicise confidential information gained in the course of their work;
- undermine the Council by adverse or negative comments to the media;
- take personal issues concerning their Council, or that of others, to the media
- bring the Council into disrepute by publicly voicing the extremity of their views;
- anonymously, do any of the above

Councillors should also be aware of the strict rules on impartiality and publicity that apply to their personal interests as stated within the National Code of Conduct. Practically, this means that in their work as a Councillor they should not enter into any form of communication that that could be criticised or that promotes personal benefits.

### **Handling the Media**

12. Media Releases - All Council media releases are always distributed via the Clerk. It is important to ensure the accuracy and quality of each release. To help achieve this, the following steps should be followed:
  - The Town Council media release must contain essential factual information i.e. who, what, why, when, where, etc (this is the information the Clerk needs to form a media release).
  - As a general guide, media releases will be no more than 500 words long, be concise and to the point.
  - The release should normally contain quotes. These should usually be the Mayor or Town Clerk, or a Member with delegated authority on specific subject matter.

- If a photo is circulated with the media release, this needs to be a good quality image. Please seek advice from the Clerk on what will interest the media and get published.
  - Relevant councillors should be aware of media releases being distributed
  - The media release may be amended before it is distributed to ensure consistency and that the release will meet the needs of the media. Major changes will be cleared by the same process as all media releases.
  - Media releases will be e-mailed to appropriate distribution lists and copies can be posted onto the Council's website upon issue.
13. Joint media releases with partners - If we are issuing or participating in a joint media release with our partners, we will ensure the following:
- The Council's role or contribution is identified appropriately and the release includes quotes from appropriate persons
  - The lead organisation will issue the press release
  - Where appropriate, the Council's logo should be included with any others on the news release paper and/or email (as most media releases are issued this way).
  - The method, manner and timing of distribution are agreed in advance with the partner.
14. Statements - Generally, statements are issued to communicate the Council's position on a specific issue. They should therefore be short and to the point. The approval process for statements is the same as media releases. As a general rule think of a media release as information that the Clerk proactively sends to all the media to gain as much media coverage as possible and think of statements as a reactive response to an issue specific to one media outlet.
15. Broadcast interviews - All interview requests must come through the Clerk and the Mayor. In response to interview requests, the Mayor should be offered the first opportunity to speak and given any necessary briefing. If they are not available or do not wish to do the interview (for example if this covers a specialist issue) and with agreement from other members, the interview may be handled by the Clerk or a delegated Member.
16. Media Enquiries - All media enquiries should be directed to the Clerk. It is important that every effort is made to respond to enquiries as quickly as possible to meet deadlines. Requests for information should be given priority and, where legally and practically appropriate, the information provided as quickly as possible.
17. Media Briefing and Alerts - Where possible, the Clerk will alert Members to significant emerging media issues. This may involve the circulation of confidential information intended to inform colleagues of the facts and ensure they are briefed if contacted by the media and/or constituents. A media alert can vary in approach, from a general e-mail for day to day enquiries that the communications team want to let the relevant people know about, to direct telephone calls for more pressing enquiries. It will, however, sometimes be necessary to issue a media alert at other times, this should be distributed via e-mail. However, depending on the urgency a telephone call should be made if someone on the circulation list is out of the office. This is much more the case during out of hours.
18. Media Training - All those who speak formally on behalf of the Council should receive some form of media training. The overall aim of the programme is to further enhance the Council's image and to ensure that the people speaking on behalf of the Council feel confident and understand the media and to make the most of opportunities as these arise. Courses can be arranged on a regular basis, for more information on the courses available, contact Telford & Wrekin Council, Parish & Town Council Group or ALC.