

Appendix 5

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Part 8 Codes and Protocols

8.8 Protocol on Press, Publicity and Publications

1. Introduction

Communication with the media can be an important member function.

There are some legal constraints that members need to be aware of, for example around communications during the period of an election or referendum. A national Publicity Code, produced by the government, sets down national guidelines for all local authorities to follow.

The Council has produced its own guidance to help officers and members understand how its overall communications approach - including in relation to press, publicity and publications - is to be implemented in North Tyneside Council. [This is called North Tyneside Council's Corporate Communications Guidelines and is available from the Corporate Communications team.](#)

If a member is unsure about the circumstances of an issue, or wishes to seek some guidance he/-she ~~should~~ can contact the Corporate Communications team.

2. Corporate Communications Team

The Council's Corporate Communications team serves the whole Council and provides internal and external communications support to all service areas.

Its role is to communicate the Council's policies, priorities, decisions and services. This includes providing information to help residents get involved in the democratic process.

Officers in the team may also provide practical advice and guidance to members on communications, for example providing contact numbers for local press, or providing a simple 'how to guide' on a number of topics.

The Corporate Communications team also has a responsibility for the reputation of the Council - ensuring that the public information about the organisation is factually correct.

The Publicity Code permits the Council to correct inaccurate information in publicity produced by third parties, so long as it is done in an even-handed and objective way.

3. Members and communications/publicity

The Council's communications may include information from members - including their views and details about projects they have contributed to delivering.

In practice, this will generally be restricted to members with special responsibility, e.g. the Elected Mayor, Chairman, Cabinet members, Chairs of Committees. However, the government guidance also accepts it is appropriate to consider including members who have been the 'face' of a particular campaign

The decision on who should be included in Council communications will be considered on an individual basis. It will take account of how best the Council can inform, explain and justify its actions and decisions to its residents and stakeholders.

However, in all instances publicity material must not seek to affect public support for an individual member or political party.

Members are able to undertake their own publicity and this can involve speaking directly to the media. It is the responsibility of members to ensure the information they give is correct and is not misleading.

4. Members and purdah

The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Government Publicity requires the Council - its officers and members - to follow additional guidance around periods of heightened sensitivity. This includes the period in the run up to a referendum or election.

This period, sometimes referred to as 'purdah', imposes additional restrictions on what the Council can include in its publicity and who can and cannot be included.

The full approach the Council will implement during these periods is detailed in the Corporate Communications Guidelines and will be the subject of specific advice by the Monitoring Officer in the run up to these periods.

4. Council resources and press, publicity and publications

It is not permitted for Council resources to be used for political purposes.

If a Member wishes to publish information that supports or promotes the views of a political party, the information must be published by the member or the political party concerned. The information cannot be published by the Council.

Similarly photographs produced by the Council cannot be used by members for political purposes.

Where resources are made available for members to support their engagement with residents, e.g. street visit cards and letter-headed paper, this will be required to meet the corporate identity guidelines.