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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b> 19 November 2013
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications</b>	<b>Report No:</b> HR/25/13/GB
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Media and Social Media Protocol</b>	

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose a new media protocol incorporating social media.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The draft press and social media protocol (Appendix 1) sets out the Council's overall approach to delivering press and media relations. It also incorporates social media and will assist in the co-ordination of communications activity.
- 2.2 The revised protocol updates the original protocol that was in place for the Council.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to agree the introduction of a new media and social media protocol.

Head of Organisational Development,  
Human Resources and Communications

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The attached media and social media protocol (Appendix 1) has been submitted to and agreed by the Corporate Management Team.
- 4.2 It incorporates many of the Council's Corporate Communications team existing operating procedures and includes specific reference to social media mechanisms.
- 4.3 The protocol has been developed for both elected members and officers.

## **5.0 PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The attached media and social media protocol aims to assist the Council and the Corporate Communications service in the co-ordination of the Council's media relations with particular reference to social media.
- 5.2 The protocol sets out a standardised system for press and media relations that will apply to both elected members and officers.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Finance: None
- 6.2 Human Resources: None
- 6.3 Legal: None
- 6.4 Equalities: There are no equalities issues

## **7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Social Media Protocol

Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications

## ***Media and social media protocol***

November 2013

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## ***Media and social media protocol***

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## ***Media and social media protocol***

October 2013

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The aim of this document is to set out a standard operating procedures for Inverclyde Council's professional relationships, working practices and operational activity with the press and media whether local, national, broadcast, specialist, online or social media.
- 1.2 Local authority publicity is governed by the **Local Government Act 1986** and guidance is provided through the **Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity**.
- 1.3 The general points of the media protocol are outlined as:
- *The Council is prevented from publishing, or helping others to publish, material which may appear to affect public support for a political party.*
  - *Social media is incorporated in the publicity code as it is used as a form of communication and publicity, including content on social network sites, websites and blogs.*
  - *The majority of press releases will contain a quote from the convener or vice convener of the relevant committee as the elected member with responsibility for those issues.*
  - *The Leader of the Council has a wide-ranging remit and can be quoted in media, material and undertake media work across all areas of the Council's services as required.*
  - *Conveners and vice conveners can be quoted on matters which relate to their individual Committees and will be pictured and quoted accordingly.*
  - *The Provost represents the Council for civic and ceremonial functions and will be pictured and quoted accordingly.*
  - *The council cannot provide press releases or media support to individual elected members in their ward role.*
  - *Press and media enquiries can be received by Corporate Communications seven days-a-week during office hours and out-of-hours.*
  - *Journalists contacting corporate communications with enquiries that are deemed to be political will be advised to contact the leader of the relevant political group for their response.*
- 1.4 Publicity is a corporate function and so should reflect the Council's views at all times
- 1.5 Therefore, it is inappropriate to publicise individual councillors, unless acting on behalf of the council as a whole – for example, council leader; provost; convener, etc.

### **2.0 THE PUBLICITY CODE**

- 2.1 All publicity the Council produces should comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, issued under the Local Government Act 1986. Local authorities are obliged to have regard to the Code in coming to any decisions on publicity.

2.2 Paragraph 20 of the Code defines the purposes of local authority publicity as:

*“To increase public awareness of the services provided by the authority and the functions it performs; to explain to electors and ratepayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities; and in general to improve local accountability.”*

2.3 Paragraphs 39 and 40 of the Code say the following about individual members of an authority:

*“The functions of a local authority are discharged by the Council corporately. It is therefore inappropriate for public resources to be used to publicise individual councillors.”*

*“In the interests of public accountability, however, it may be appropriate to give publicity to the views or activities of individual members when they are representing the council as a whole: for example, when the chairman of a council speaks or acts as the first citizen of the whole community, or when a chairman of a committee opens a new scheme or launches a policy approved by the council or by his committee on the council’s behalf.”*

2.4 The Code applies to media relations work as well as other forms of communication and publicity produced by the Council, including social media.

### **3.0 SOCIAL MEDIA**

3.1 Social media has become an essential vehicle for communication and publicity, and for that reason it must be looked at with caution as it not only reflects on the individual personally, but Inverclyde Council as an organisation.

3.2 Social media guidance: There are many different types of social media platforms and the list of websites and applications are increasingly growing by the day, with each site or application being unique. For the purpose of this guidance we use the term to include:

- Social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter)
- Blogs and microblogs (such as WordPress and Twitter)
- Content communities (such as YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and Flickr)
- Collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), and
- Internet forums and online discussion boards.

3.3 Before setting up a social media site authorisation must be gained from Corporate Communications for a number of reasons:

- To determine the purpose and overall strategic goals of using the specific site.
- To assess whether the chosen site meets strategic aims initially outlined.
- To ensure the chosen site is the most appropriate for your content.
- To evaluate if a similar account already exists for the same purpose.
- To assess an ongoing commitment to maintain and develop the site.

3.4 All Council social media sites will be evaluated each year and if no use or little engagement has taken place in the previous year, the site should be closed down and content removed if appropriate.

3.5 How employees and councillors communicate with people on social media sites reflects on the individual and on Inverclyde Council as an organisation. It is vital that employees understand the expected behaviour, and the general principles as stated in the [Acceptable Use of Information Systems Policy](#); [Employees code of Conduct](#) and [Councillors' code of conduct](#) are applied.

- 3.6 If employees choose to disclose their employment with Inverclyde Council on social media platforms, they are expected to follow the overall principles of this media and social media guidance when posting and sharing content. Various social media sites will have their own rules and guidance, but if there is anything that could potentially be seen as breaking these rules and damaging the reputation of the council, corporate communications reserve the right to ask that it be removed or that the site be closed down.
- 3.7 To avoid this from occurring remember when using social media:
- **Be responsible, clear and relevant.** You are responsible for the content you publish on any social media platform; everything you post is a reflection of yourself and Inverclyde Council.
  - **No spamming.** Do not post the same message, or very similar messages more than once.
  - **Publishing online is permanent** - Be mindful that what you publish will be in the public domain for a long time and can appear in search engine results/ user screen grabs even **after** you delete it.
  - **Respect copyright** especially in the use of images or music.
  - **External links and sources should be relevant and safe**, and must not compromise the integrity of the Council.
  - **Respect your audience.** Never behave in a manner which would not be acceptable in the workplace or a face to face meeting e.g. swearing, personal insults or discrimination.
  - **No defamatory comments.** All employees must not make false statements to harm the reputation of an individual, organisation or community. This could in turn damage the Council's reputation.
  - **Do not advertise products or services.**
  - **Do not promote any political parties, candidates, or groups.** This is of particular relevance to officers in politically restricted posts, but all other employees must ensure the balance is reached with expressing your personal views and whether this can be misinterpreted and compromise your position as a council employee.

*Basically, don't post anything you wouldn't want to see on the front page of the newspaper.*

- 3.8 **Security Guidelines:** Depending on which social media application you use, there are privacy settings available to help you control what information you would like to be *visible* to other users. You should look into your profile settings to see how 'private' your information is currently, and keep in mind that content you have deleted may still appear in the public domain. *Top tip:* Enter your full name into a search engine to view how accessible your personal information on social media platforms is to the public.
- 3.9 The purpose of social media is to provide an easier and faster way of informing the public of council services, news, events and any other relevant issues. A wider audience can be reached and information can be shared through various social media platforms directly.
- 3.10 At present, Corporate Communications maintain and use *twitter* as a means of informing residents and the wider audience of council activities, upcoming events, available vacancies, news in and around the Inverclyde area, and any other general news items that would positively promote the area. All items that are published on the website are automatically 'tweeted' onto Inverclyde Council [@inverclyde](#) twitter page through RSS feeds, allowing for direct news to residents and a wider reach.
- 3.11 Individual service social media accounts should be linked to the main council twitter account to ensure sharing and cross promotion of council events and activity takes place in a co-ordinated way. Advice should be sought from Corporate Communications before any social media activity is undertaken or account set up.

## **4.0 THE ROLE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council's corporate communications team is the primary point of contact between the Council and the local and national media for proactive and reactive communications.
- 4.2 Employees who are contacted by the media should immediately direct the query to Corporate Communications team who will represent and communicate the views of the Council at all times.
- 4.3 Most media enquiries will require a quick response to meet strict media deadlines, particularly in emergency situations. Senior officers are required to support Corporate Communications to meet deadlines to ensure the Council does not lose its right to reply and has the opportunity to provide a fast, accurate and honest account of its actions. This also applies to enquiries on social media platforms.
- 4.4 It is important that Corporate Communications are contacted as quickly as possible about any incident or initiative that is likely to be reported by the media.
- 4.5 Any officer wishing to organise media coverage or to publicise an issue or an event should speak to Corporate Communications as early as possible and ideally at least two weeks in advance. No date for an event should be chosen before consulting Corporate Communications.
- 4.6 The council will be open and honest in all communications with the media, taking account of legal, privacy or commercial considerations and will never say 'no comment'.

## **5.0 PRESS RELEASES**

- 5.1 The purpose of a press release is to gain coverage in printed and online media to promote the activities of the Council, its decisions and policies.
- 5.2 The majority of press releases will contain a quote from the Convener or Vice Convener of the relevant committee as the elected member with responsibility for those issues. Where a press release may cross a number of services or committees the Council Leader may be quoted.
- 5.3 All quotes included will be approved by the named individual to whom the quote is attributed. If this is not possible within the necessary timescale the Leader of the Council will be asked for final clearance.
- 5.4 The Provost will be quoted on civic issues and on issues arising from the Provost's activities, attendance at events and as 'chair' of the full council meeting and as 'first citizen' of Inverclyde.
- 5.5 Press releases are also published on the Council website and published on social media channels (eg twitter and Facebook). Press releases or media support cannot be provided to individual elected members in their ward role.

## **6.0 PHOTOCALLS**

- 6.1 The purpose of a photocall is to provide an opportunity for the press and media to gain a visual relating to an activity, event or service to publish and gain coverage in printed and online media.
- 6.2 Photocalls will be arranged through Corporate Communications with the assistance of the service.
- 6.3 The Council Leader or Deputy Leader and/or the Convener and Vice Convener will be invited to attend photocall events on behalf of the Council. Invitations to photocalls will generally be issued by the relevant service, who will collate and co-ordinate responses and advise the communications team. Services must also ensure relevant permissions are in place for photographs to be taken.



- 6.4 For events or activities with a strong local connection, relevant ward councillors may be invited to attend by the Council service.
- 6.5 If elected members have been invited to attend a formal 'launch' event or opening group photographs may be taken of all those in attendance. There can be no guarantee that all or any individual councillor or Convener's photograph would be used by the press or media.
- 6.6 Corporate Communications is still empowered to set up additional photographs at the photocall if it is requested by the media to encourage more extensive coverage for the Council. The final decision on photographs issued to the press and media will be based on the best quality of photograph taken to represent the service, activity or event and gain maximum coverage.
- 6.7 Media organisations have suggested there is more chance they will use a photograph if there are fewer individuals in it.
- 6.8 Copyright for photographs taken by Corporate Communications rests with the Council. When external photographers are commissioned the Council will ensure it has freedom to use the images as required – for example in Council publications, for issue to the media, on the Council website and in publicity material used to promote the Council.

## **7.0 SCHOOLS**

- 7.1 Schools and education establishment may contact the media about arranged local school events. Activity in schools should be notified to corporate communications to examine if there are any opportunities for wider promotion.
- 7.2 Any enquiry from the media or press about a school-related incident or council policy should always be referred to corporate communications.

## **8.0 PRESS ENQUIRIES**

- 8.1 Press and media enquiries can be received by Corporate Communications 7 days a week during office hours and out-of-hours.
- 8.2 While the team has extensive media contacts and is generally the first port of call for the press, officers and elected members may be contacted directly by the media.
- 8.3 Elected members approached by the media for an official Council comment should discuss the request with the communications team who can provide support and guidance.
- 8.4 Media enquiries received by officers should, without exception, be directed to the communications team.
- 8.5 Most enquiries will require a quick response and requests from the communications team for information should be viewed as a high priority by council officers. Failure to respond in time can leave the Council open to criticism and a public perception that it is unwilling to be open and accountable.
- 8.6 In extremely urgent cases the communications team will use their own professional judgement to provide appropriate quotes as necessary.
- 8.7 Quotes from the council communications team will use the convention: 'A council spokesman/person/man/woman said:...'. It should be recognised that this is a journalistic convention and some media may choose to quote individual members of the communication team by name.

- 8.8 In some cases, such as on technical or specialist enquiries, quotes will be issued in the name of a Council officer.

## **9.0 MEDIA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) ENQUIRIES**

- 9.1 All FOI enquiries from the press and media should be copied to the communications team. Where appropriate, officers compiling responses to freedom of information enquiries which could attract media attention should contact the communications team to discuss incorporating more explanatory information into the response or to prepare background information for follow-up enquiries.

## **10.0 DATA PROTECTION**

- 10.1 Members of Corporate Communications will abide by the terms of the Data Protection Act.

## **11.0 POLITICAL PRESS ENQUIRIES**

- 11.1 Journalists contacting Corporate Communications with enquiries that are deemed to be political will be advised to contact the leader of the relevant political group for their response. Elected members should make their own arrangements for issuing party political material to the media and ensure that the material does not use the Council's corporate identity or branding.

## **12.0 WARD COUNCILLORS**

- 12.1 Corporate Communications can provide non-party political communications advice to individual councillors but cannot produce press releases or arrange photo calls for members on individual ward or party political issues. They also cannot write or issue press releases on behalf of individual political groups or independent councillors/groups.

## **13.0 FILMING/INTERVIEW**

- 13.1 All requests for filming or interviews should be directed to Corporate Communications.

## **14.0 COUNCIL PHOTOGRAPHY**

- 14.1 Photographs taken by the council or on behalf of the Council for publicity purposes are the property of Inverclyde Council. Photographs taken by externally commissioned photographers may also be subject to copyright agreements with those photographers. It would therefore be inappropriate for photographs to be used for party political or election purposes.

## **15.0 POTENTIAL MEDIA ISSUES**

- 15.1 Officers should notify Corporate Communications of any issues within their service that has the potential to become a media story, even if it is out of hours. They should also provide contact details and ensure that they are available to Corporate Communications either by mobile or by responding to emails.
- 15.2 Officers should avoid withholding information because they do not wish to attract negative media coverage or because they do not see media handling as a priority. They should not respond directly to media or requests for quotes from any organisation, unless expressly authorised to do so by Corporate Communications

## **16.0 COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS**

- 16.1 Corporate Communications team will report on decisions made by Council committees. Their role is not to report the debate, detailed discussions which take place or to minute the meeting.

## **17.0 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- 17.1 The Council does not comment on planning applications ahead of a Planning Committee decision except to confirm that an application has been received. The exception to this would be any communication around consultation or public information of applications the Council has a direct interest in.
- 17.2 In most cases journalists would be directed to the council's online planning service which hosts a wealth of information and drawings on applications. Any pictures or graphics are generally owned by the applicant or their agent. If asked for copies by the media, journalists will generally be referred directly to the applicant or their agent.

## **18.0 PUBLICITY AHEAD OF ELECTIONS/REFERENDUMS**

- 18.1 In the period directly before an election (usually six weeks or the period from the Notice of Election to the election itself), councils must be careful about what they publicise.
- 18.2 The Code of Recommended Practice says: "The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members. However, it is acceptable for the authority to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that their answers are factual and not party political. Members holding key political or civil positions should be able to comment in an emergency where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control. Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election."
- 18.3 In pre-election circumstances, where a quote is required, the Chief Executive, relevant Corporate Director or relevant senior officer may be quoted.
- 18.4 Local circumstances may mean that some proactive events need to take place in this period, in which case, following advice from the Corporate Director and Head of Legal and Democratic services, any approved publicity photocalls and press releases should include representatives from all political parties in the Council.

## **19.0 EMERGENCY MEDIA RELATIONS**

- 19.1 The Council, as part of its Emergency Plan, has a Civil Emergency Communications Plan which addresses how to handle the media in such circumstances. The Council has also signed up to the Regional Resilience Partnership communications plan which contains a mutual aid agreement between the partners. If the Council's Emergency Plan is brought into use, all of the Council's media relations work must be done in conjunction with the Civil Emergency Communications Plan.
- 19.2 If the Council experiences its own emergency situation and invokes its Business Continuity Plan, the corporate communications team will invoke its Business Continuity communications plan and all media relations activity will be managed in conjunction with this.

## **20.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CONTACT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

- 20.1 Council services contacted by an external communications/media/marketing service looking to issue a press releases or arrange communications activity involving the Council or looking to set up a photocall, should immediately be referred to the Council's Corporate Communications service. Corporate Communciations will liaise with the external organisation or their representatives.
- 20.2 Where the Council is involved in issuing a press release as part of a partnership with a third party organisation, the partnership's arrangements for who to quote must be followed. This would normally be the chair of the organisation.
- 20.3 In the case of a press release being prepared on behalf of a number of partners it may be appropriate to offer each partner an opportunity to be quoted. All partners should be given an opportunity to approve the release with a stated timeframe.
- 20.4 If officers are contacted by a third party organisation seeking a Council comment on a press release or looking to involve the Council in photocalls or publicity, they should be referred to the corporate communications team.

## **21.0 MINISTERIAL VISITS**

- 21.1 The Scottish and UK Governments may choose Inverclyde for ministerial visits and/or launch events.
- 21.2 Corporate Communications should be told immediately and given any details to allow timely liaison with the relevant government department about any media coverage for the visit.
- 21.3 The Council's Members Services and Chief Executive's office should also be informed immediately.
- 21.4 The Leader, Deputy Leader and/or relevant Convener and Vice Convener will be invited to attend such an event on behalf of the Council. The Chief Executive and relevant Corporate Director will also be invited to attend.
- 21.5 If the Minister is opening or launching a service of particular local interest, wherever possible, all ward members should be invited to attend. See appendix 1 titled 'Invitation list'

## **22.0 MONITORING PRESS ENQUIRIES AND PRESS RELEASES**

- 22.1 The council uses press office management software to record and monitor its response to press and media enquiries and press releases issued.
- 22.2 All press releases and responses to press and media enquiries should be logged using that system by the council's communications team.
- 22.3 Any service wishing to carry out direct press and media relations on an ongoing basis will require to purchase a license and comply fully with the council's press and media protocol. Individual officers may be subject to training. Press releases will be subject to review prior to distribution by the council's communications team.

## **23.0 DISTRIBUTION OF PRESS RELEASES**

- 23.1 Press releases distributed to the press and media will also be distributed to Councillors and the Corporate Management Team. This distribution will take place after press releases are distributed to the press and media and usually when the press release is published on the council website.
- 23.2 Content issued as an exclusive to a press or media organisation or used for feature purposes may not be distributed widely or published online through the council website or through social media before the publication/broadcast date.

## **Appendix 1: Invitation List**

Below is a standard invitation list for a range of press and media activities.

### **Local launch:**

- Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost
- Relevant convener and/or vice convener(s)
- Local ward councillors
- Relevant Corporate Director(s) and/or Chief Executive
- Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

### **Photocall:**

- Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost, if appropriate
- Relevant convener and/or vice convener
- Relevant Corporate Director(s) and/or Chief Executive, if appropriate
- Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

### **Ministerial visit:**

- Leader or Depute Leader
- Provost or Depute Provost
- Relevant convener and/or vice convener
- Local ward councillors
- Relevant Corporate Director(s) and Chief Executive
- Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations).

## Appendix 2: Media and social media quick guide for officers

### Political press and media:

- *The Council is prevented from publishing, or helping others to publish, material which may appear to affect public support for a political party.*
- *The Council cannot provide press releases or media support to individual elected members in their ward role.*
- Journalists contacting Corporate Communications with enquiries that are deemed to be political will be advised to contact the leader of the relevant political group for their response.

### Social media:

- Before setting up a social media site authorisation must be gained from Corporate Communications.
- All Council social media sites will be evaluated each year and if no use or little engagement has taken place in the previous year, the site should be closed down and content removed if appropriate.
- If employees choose to disclose their employment with Inverclyde Council on social media platforms, they are expected to follow the overall principles of this media and social media guidance when posting and sharing content.

### Press and media:

- Corporate communications is the primary point of contact between the Council and the local and national media for proactive and reactive communications.
- Press and media enquiries can be received by Corporate Communications seven-days-a-week during office hours and out-of-hours.
- Employees who are contacted by the media should immediately direct the query to the communications team who will represent and communicate the views of the Council at all times.
- It is important that corporate communications are contacted as quickly as possible about any incident or initiative that is likely to be reported by the media.
- Any officer wishing to organise media coverage or to publicise an issue or an event should speak to corporate communications as early as possible and ideally at least two weeks in advance. No date for an event should be chosen before consulting the corporate communications team.
- In some cases, such as on technical or specialist enquiries, quotes will be issued in the name of a council officer.

### Media Freedom of Information (FOI) enquiries:

- All FOI enquiries from the press and media should be copied to Corporate Communications. Where appropriate, officers compiling responses to freedom of information enquiries which could attract media attention should contact Corporate Communications to discuss incorporating more explanatory information into the response or to prepare background information for follow-up enquiries.

#### Filming/interview:

- All requests for filming or interviews should be directed to the communications team.

#### Planning applications

- The council does not comment on planning applications ahead of a Planning Committee decision except to confirm that an application has been received. The exception to this would be any communication around consultation or public information of applications the council has a direct interest in.

#### Publicity ahead of elections/referendums

- In pre-election circumstances, where a quote is required, the Chief Executive, relevant Corporate Director or relevant senior officer may be quoted.
- Local circumstances may mean that some proactive events need to take place in this period, in which case, following advice from the Corporate Director and Head of Legal and Democratic services, any approved publicity photocalls and press releases should include representatives from all political parties in the Council.

#### Emergency media relations:

- If the Council's Emergency Plan is brought into use, all of the Council's media relations work must be done in conjunction with the Civil Emergency Communications Plan.

#### External communications contact:

- Council services contacted by an external communications/media/marketing service looking to issue a press releases or arrange communications activity involving the Council or looking to set up a photocall, should immediately be referred to Corporate Communications. The Corporate Communications team will liaise with the external organisation or their representatives.
- If officers are contacted by a third party organisation seeking a Council comment on a press release or looking to involve the Council in photocalls or publicity, they should be referred to the Corporate Communications team.

#### Ministerial visits:

- Corporate Communications should be told immediately and given any details to allow timely liaison with the relevant government department about any media coverage for the visit. The council's Members Services and Chief Executive's office should also be informed immediately.
- The following invitation list should be used for the following levels of activity:

##### **Local launch:**

Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost  
Relevant convener and/or vice convener(s)  
Local ward councillors  
Relevant Corporate director(s) and/or Chief Executive  
Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

##### **Photocall:**

Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost, if appropriate  
Relevant convener and/or vice convener  
Relevant Corporate director(s) and/or Chief Executive, if appropriate  
Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

**Ministerial visit:**

Leader or Depute Leader

Provost or Depute Provost

Relevant convener and/or vice convener

Local ward councillors

Relevant Corporate director(s) and Chief Executive

Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations).

**Monitoring press enquiries and press releases:**

- The Council uses press office management software to record and monitor its response to press and media enquiries and press releases issued. All press releases and responses to press and media enquiries should be logged using that system by the Council's Corporate Communications team. Any service wishing to carry out direct press and media relations on an ongoing basis will require to purchase a license and comply fully with the Council's press and media protocol. Individual officers may be subject to training. Press releases will be subject to review prior to distribution by the Council's Corporate Communications team.

**Distribution of press releases:**

- Press releases distributed to the press and media will also be distributed to Councillors and the Corporate Management Team. This distribution will take place after press releases are distributed to the press and media and usually when the press release is published on the council website.
- Content issued as an exclusive to a press or media organisation or used for feature purposes may not be distributed widely or published online through the council website or through social media before the publication/broadcast date.



### Appendix 3: Media and social media quick guide for councillors

#### Political press and media:

- *The Council is prevented from publishing, or helping others to publish, material which may appear to affect public support for a political party.*
- *Journalists contacting corporate communications with enquiries that are deemed to be political will be advised to contact the leader of the relevant political group for their response.*
- *The Council cannot provide press releases or media support to individual elected members in their ward role.*

#### Press and media:

- The Council's corporate communications team is the primary point of contact between the Council and the local and national media for proactive and reactive communications.
- Press and media enquiries can be received by Corporate Communications 7 days a week during office hours and out-of-hours.
- The majority of press releases will contain a quote from the Convener or Vice Convener of the relevant committee as the elected member with responsibility for those issues.
- The Leader of the Council has a wide-ranging remit and can be quoted in media, material and undertake media work across all areas of the Council's services as required.
- Conveners and vice conveners can be quoted on matters which relate to their individual committees and will be pictured and quoted accordingly.
- The Provost represents the Council for civic and ceremonial functions and will be pictured and quoted accordingly.
- The council cannot provide press releases or media support to individual elected members in their ward role.

#### Social media:

- *Social media is incorporated in the publicity code as it is used as a form of communication and publicity, including content on social network sites, websites and blogs.*

#### Planning applications

- The Council does not comment on planning applications ahead of a Planning Committee decision except to confirm that an application has been received. The exception to this would be any communication around consultation or public information of applications the council has a direct interest in.

#### Publicity ahead of elections/referendums:

- In pre-election circumstances, where a quote is required, the Chief Executive, relevant Corporate Director or relevant senior officer may be quoted.

- Local circumstances may mean that some proactive events need to take place in this period, in which case, following advice from the relevant Corporate Director and Head of Legal and Democratic services, any approved publicity photocalls and press releases should include representatives from all political parties in the Council.

Ministerial visits:

- Corporate communications should be told immediately and given any details to allow timely liaison with the relevant government department about any media coverage for the visit.
- The council's members services and chief executive's office should also be informed immediately.
- The following invitation list should be used for the following levels of activity:

**Local launch:**

Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost  
 Relevant convener and/or vice convener(s)  
 Local ward councillors  
 Relevant Corporate Director(s) and/or Chief Executive  
 Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

**Photocall:**

Leader/Depute Leader or Provost/Depute Provost, if appropriate  
 Relevant convener and/or vice convener  
 Relevant Corporate Director(s) and/or Chief Executive, if appropriate  
 Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations)

**Ministerial visit:**

Leader or Depute Leader  
 Provost or Depute Provost  
 Relevant convener and/or vice convener  
 Local ward councillors  
 Relevant executive director(s) and Chief Executive  
 Corporate Communications Manager and/or Communications Officer (Media Relations).

Distribution of press releases:

- Press releases distributed to the press and media will also be distributed to councillors and the corporate management team. This distribution will take place after press releases are distributed to the press and media and usually when the press release is published on the Council website.
- Content issued as an exclusive to a press or media organisation or used for feature purposes may not be distributed widely or published online through the Council website or through social media before the publication/broadcast date.