

Media Protocol

What all staff need to know

Media relations are primarily the responsibility of the council's press desk, which is part of the communications & digital media team. They co-ordinate all pro-active and reactive aspects of this work and must be directly involved in all dealings with the media.

In handling media enquiries, the team will assess each enquiry on the basis of the promotional opportunity it might offer or its sensitivity and likelihood to cause difficulties, as appropriate. It will involve the city mayor and his team, senior and other officers and members as necessary to ensure that any response represents an accurate corporate viewpoint.

Who needs to read on?

- All staff who are approached by the media or who are asked to deal with media issues.
- Elected members.

Requirements

All Leicester City Council officers should be committed to ensuring that the image of the council, as portrayed in the media, is accurate, as positive as possible and reflects a corporate viewpoint.

All enquiries from the media on non-political matters – corporate or divisional – should, under normal circumstances, be referred to the press desk. If circumstances make this impossible, the press desk should be advised of how the enquiry has been dealt with at the earliest opportunity. Minor enquiries initiated by the media of a purely factual and non-contentious nature – for example checking opening times of facilities, details of public events – need not be referred. If in doubt about the significance of the enquiry, contact the press desk.

Where officers are asked for assistance in dealing with sensitive media enquiries by the press desk, this assistance should be given as a matter of priority and within the deadlines advised at the time.

To maximise the value of opportunities, it is essential the press desk is made aware of potential good news as early as possible; they should be directly involved in planning how these opportunities are dealt with.

Proposals to involve the media in initiatives and promotional opportunities should always be discussed with the press desk well before the media are approached, and any media approaches should be agreed in advance with the team. This is vital when activity involves the city mayor and his team as well as public reports to cabinet, committees and council.

Where problems are foreseen, the press desk should be alerted to these as early as possible and should be directly involved in planning how they are to be dealt with.

Again, this is vital when activity involves the city mayor and his team and public reports to cabinet, committees and council.

Unreasonable criticism or inaccurate comment appearing in the media needs to be responded to immediately (i.e. the same day, or as early the following morning as possible). It is the responsibility of strategic and divisional directors to initiate this response (always in consultation with the press desk, who will also prompt a response as soon as it becomes aware of any problems).

All council news releases and formal statements for the media should be written and issued by the press desk. When news releases are required, content and timing should be discussed initially with the press desk to ensure co-ordination with other media activities. Information should be presented to the team as early as possible in the form of bullet points containing key facts, messages, dates (if appropriate), locations (if appropriate), etc. Information should not be presented in the form of a written release as this often makes editing more difficult. Wherever necessary, the press desk will edit any material provided, to ensure it is presented in the most appropriate way.

The council's principal spokespeople are the city mayor, deputy city mayor and the team of assistant mayors, who will normally be put forward for any broadcast interviews and quoted in all appropriate news releases. Officer quotes will only be used when the relevant member is not available or a mayoral/councillor quote is not appropriate. It is acceptable for officers to be quoted in relation to factual, technical or professional issues.

Strategic and divisional directors are responsible for keeping ward councillors informed of media statements, news releases or other media-related issues affecting individual wards that may arise.

Key press desk contact details:

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	Internal:	29 6074
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