

George Nympton & Queen's Nympton Parish Council
NEWS MEDIA POLICY
(Adopted on 17 March 2015)

1. This policy is to guide both Councillors and Officers of the George Nympton and Queen's Nympton Parish Council (The Council) in their relations with the news media in such a way as to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Council.
2. This policy does not seek to be comprehensive but sets out to provide guidance when dealing with news media organisations including press officers attending meetings.
3. The Council is accountable to the electorate for its actions and shall therefore be proactive in making all reasonable efforts to make its decisions and policies known to the electorate.
4. The Council shall allow all reasonable access to news media organisations. In the first instance all contact with media organisations shall be via the Parish Council Chairperson who may nominate a parish councillor to deal with the media on a particular topic/issue.
5. The Council shall make every effort to respond without delay to requests for information from news media organisations.
6. Councillors and officers must not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with news media organisations of any item which has been discussed under confidential items on The Council's agenda.
7. Councillors and Officers should act with integrity at all times when representing or acting on behalf of The Council.
8. When dealing with news media organisations Councillors and Officers should
 - (a) be informed and certain of all their facts;
 - (b) ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Parish Council they are aware what Council policy is and their comments reflect that policy;
 - (c) be calm;
 - (d) ensure that their comments and views will not bring The Council, its Councillors or its Officers into disrepute;
 - (e) ensure that comments are neither libellous nor slanderous.

9. Councillors should be aware that case law states that the role of Councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful about expressing individual views to the news media, whether or not they relate to matters of Council business.
Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council policy once made, while it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make clear that he or she disagreed with a policy and voted against it (if this took place in an open session), they should not seek to undermine a decision through the news media.
10. To avoid confusion and misunderstanding Councillors and Officers are advised to prepare a written statement when dealing with the press or media. The statement should be reviewed and agreed by the Council prior to releasing to the press or media.
11. A Councillor should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer or Councillor at meetings held in public or when engaged in any capacity with the news media .
12. All news releases and enquiries made on behalf of the The Council will be authorised by the Parish Clerk after consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman of The Council and are therefore never answered immediately.
13. The Council Chairperson must be informed of an intention by the public or a news media organisation to record the proceedings of a Council meeting whether it be photographic, audio, video or by transcription. Such recordings must:
 - a) comply with the Chairperson's instructions at all times during the meeting
 - b) whenever possible, set up all equipment prior to the promulgated start of the meeting
 - c) minimise any disruption to the meeting i.e. there should be no oral commentary or noisy equipment
 - d) faithfully record the proceeding of the meeting
 - e) if in any doubt, details of such recordings must be confirmed with the Chairperson prior to publishing
 - f) not violate the privacy of any individual present at the meeting
 - g) be carried out from the confines of the public seating area unless agreed otherwise by the Chairperson