

PETERCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Policy for handling media enquiries

Ratified at Meeting No PPC/MW/049
13th December 2011

1. It is generally best if one person is nominated as the key media contact.
Parish Council Chairman
2. If anyone else is approached regarding a media enquiry that person should not make any comment, or be drawn into a conversation.
3. The best response is to simply make a holding statement, such as I cannot comment you will need to speak to the Parish Council Chairman who is the spokesperson.
4. Avoid being drawn into a conversation by a comment such as: "It will only take a minute."
5. It is also good practice though to find out what the call is about. This gives anyone dealing with the media a chance to marshal their thoughts.
6. The main media contact should then be contacted and given the enquiry information.
7. Never say anything that you would not wish to see in print or repeated on air. Also, remember that the media person may well be recording any phone conversation and will certainly be taking notes. It is advisable therefore to take notes of any call as well.
8. Another point to remember is that whatever you say will probably be edited, so don't say more than is needed. Be succinct and be aware that a technique often used by a good reporter is to stay silent after an answer. People don't like that and will often then volunteer additional information, to fill the gap.
9. Try to edit your comment mentally to make it accurate, concise and relevant.
10. If you have the opportunity (which you will have if you have declined to answer immediately and arranged to call someone back) draft your answer before making that call. Also, try to anticipate any follow up questions.
11. Be aware that a reporter calling about something will quite probably have in mind what he thinks is a good story. He will then just want to ask whatever questions are needed to produce the answers which will make it stand up.
12. Remember, always obtain the name and number of any media caller and find out who they work for and what they are calling about. It is a common error to just get the name when under pressure and forget about the rest...
13. Never comment about something you don't know about and always pass the call on to the nominated media spokesperson. Otherwise it is all too easy for two people to say completely different things!

14. If it is likely that something involving the parish council is going to generate media interest, always plan ahead. Draft out a position paper with the most likely questions and the appropriate answers, but for radio use don't try to read them, this just makes the response sound stilted, as only professional actors are effective at reading a script.

Print Name

.....Councillor.....Mr Brendan C Treanor.....

Signed



.....Date...13/12/2011...

Print Name

.....Councillor.....Mr M Church.....

Signed



.....Date.....13/12/2011...

Witnessed

Parish Council Clerk / RFO



Mr. Malcolm Walker.....Date...13/12/2011.....