

## Principles and Protocols for Proactive Communications with Media and Social Media Outlets

### 1. Background and Introduction

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to effective communications so that citizens of the County are well informed about the services that affect their lives every day and how these services are organised, led and developed. The local media, both traditional and increasingly well-followed social media platforms, play a valuable role in Cambridgeshire life, as they have the ability to reach large numbers of local residents.
- 1.2 The Council's Communications team aims to provide an efficient and timely response to media enquiries and raise the positive public profile of the authority by actively promoting accurate and balanced coverage of its work and activities.
- 1.3 The proactive communications and marketing of the authority is led by the Head of Communications and Information, working with a team of senior communications managers responsible for overseeing News and External Affairs, Campaigns and Projects, Web and digital, and Internal Communications.
- 1.4 To manage the demands of a 24-hour rolling news agenda, the Council's news desk is available from 9:00am to 5:00pm every working day, but provides an on-call emergency communications service for the media, senior officers and Members at other times.
- 1.5 The Communications team will maintain a rolling, forward grid of media and campaign opportunities which are reviewed on a regular basis and are able to be adapted at short notice. This will be based on suggestions from across all service areas and committees linked to the Council's priority outcomes.
- 1.6 ~~It is recognised that the authority wants to speak on issues of relevance in its community leadership role on behalf of the people of Cambridgeshire, and where national issues or developments in other organisations arise on which the authority has relevant knowledge and experience.~~ **Local authorities should ensure that publicity relating to policies and proposals from central government is balanced and factually accurate. Such publicity may set out the local authority's views and reasons for holding those views but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.** It is the role of senior officers, as well as the Communications team where possible, to maintain an awareness of forthcoming potential external developments which have relevance to the Council's operations or priority outcomes (e.g. the publication of research reports and national Government announcements), and to ensure the authority is ready to react in advance or is able to respond as quickly as possible.

## 2. The Legal Framework

2.1 The unit operates within the terms and spirit of a legal framework set out in the Local Government Act 1986, which states that:

A local authority shall not publish any material which in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

2.2 The Act defines publicity as:

any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public.

2.3 The unit operates within the national Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, first published by the Government in August 1988 and revised in 2001 and 2011. The revised code states that publicity issued by local authorities should be lawful, cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

2.4 In the event of any potential conflict, the Monitoring Officer will be involved.

## 3. Principles

A number of fundamental principles underpin the work of the Communications team.

3.1 No surprises / Members first

3.1.1 All Members quoted or named on a release (e.g. Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, Committee Chairs, opposition Spokes, Local Members, etc.), will be sent news releases, statements or responses before they are sent to the media, so that they have time to digest and consider the issue prior to them responding to any follow-up media enquiry.

3.1.2 For the majority of news releases, the team aims to give named Members 12 – 24 hours' notice of the issue of a release, on the understanding that these are not shared in advance of publication time.

3.1.3 Where this is not possible, on urgent news items linked to serious issues, releases will still be sent to Members a minimum of 30 minutes before they are issued to the media, and a communications officer will ~~telephone~~ **contact** the relevant Member(s) **in the most appropriate way** to check receipt.

3.1.4 All other Members will be sent links to news releases at the same time that they are issued to the media. Every attempt will be made to make sure Members should not hear critical Council information first from other sources.

- 3.1.5 It is recognised that the urgency of dealing with news stories at short notice will sometimes require telephone contact and out-of-hours contact to ensure a timely response. In order to ensure due respect for Members and officers involved, account will be taken to the level of seriousness of the story and the potential impact of the communication.
- 3.2 Members actively involved
- 3.2.1 The content of all ~~principal~~ news releases **relating to strategic issues or changes to Council policy** will be shared and developed in draft stages with the Leader and/or appropriate Committee Chair.
- 3.3 Staff informed
- 3.3.1 Media releases will be agreed with the lead officer or service director and approved by them prior to release. Staff should not learn of changes to their services or employment from the media, and so information about such changes will be shared with them in advance of, or at the same time as media issue. The Council's news releases will also be posted on the internet as soon as they are published.
- 3.4 Honest
- 3.4.1 The team will never knowingly mislead the media on a story or issue. Communications staff are in a long-term relationship with the local media in particular and they must trust the team's counsel and respect its honesty of approach.
- 3.5 Accessible and timely
- 3.5.1 Staff are firm, friendly but polite in dealings with the media, always ensure contact numbers are accurate and appropriate, and return calls efficiently to recognise competing pressures on deadlines. The timeliness of the response rate to media enquiries is recorded and a media officer is available to the media (and key departmental and political contacts) on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week.
- 3.6 Fair
- 3.6.1 The Team does not routinely favour one media source over another. Where appropriate, staff will identify the relative importance of media sources and be able to clearly justify any strategy that promotes one over another. Where concerns are raised about the impartiality of a particular media source, these will be raised with the media outlet concerned initially, and if unresolved, advice will be sought from the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.7 Prompt and courteous rebuttal

- 3.7.1 Where there is a threat that inaccurate stories could damage the reputation of the Council, the Communications team will challenge the story at source, rather than waiting for it to be published. If inaccurate and damaging stories are published, the team will contact the source concerned and seek redress.
4. **Work with Meedia**
- 4.1 **General**
- 4.1.1 One of the most important aspects of dealing with and managing the media is being able to provide a prompt response to a query, question or interview request. The sooner the Council can respond and involve itself in the story, the greater the chance it has to influence it. This is especially important where the Council's reputation might be affected.
- 4.1.2 The team also wishes to influence the news agenda proactively by offering people for interview or providing case studies to illustrate topical issues.
- 4.1.3 The team will use links with departments and Council committees, as well as the forward plan to identify opportunities in advance, but still want/have to exploit on-the-day stories, particularly when there is breaking news or developing stories.
- 4.2 **Answering media enquiries**
- 4.2.1 The team will answer relevant media enquiries as soon as possible, especially as stories are now posted online quickly. If an issue does not involve the Council, or the Council has no comment to make, the reporter will be advised promptly. If the Communications team believes that a deadline is too tight, it will negotiate an extension if it can. Members and officers are encouraged to respond to the Communications unit as quickly as possible, as missing deadlines and being 'unavailable for comment' can harm the Council's reputation.
- 4.2.3 The team will not respond to media outlets posting questions to the Council on social media platforms, but will direct them to make their enquiries through the normal communications route (in or out of hours), where both the questions and answers can be logged and monitored, and appropriate Member or senior officer approval can be sought **oversight can be obtained**.
- 4.3 **Approach to aggressive enquiries**
- 4.3.1 The Communications team will answer journalists' enquiries courteously and will expect this to be reciprocated. However, if journalists are aggressive or rude, the team reserves the right to politely end a phone conversation and request that the enquiry is made by email.
- 4.4 **Use of Freedom of Information requests (FOIs)**

- 4.4.1 The team will encourage the media to submit enquiries, rather than FOIs, and remind them that FOIs are answered within a formal timescale, which can be slower than submitting an enquiry through the usual communications route. **All FOIs from media outlets or concerning contentious issues** will be sent to the Communications team's leads for FOI enquiries, who will sense check proposed responses, ~~especially those to requests submitted by the media,~~ and prepare statements where necessary. The team works with the FOI team and departments to reduce the number of FOI requests by encouraging the proactive publication of key information to regular schedules.
- 4.5 Press releases
- 4.5.1 The team will email press releases to all relevant local, regional and national media contacts and will update the distribution list when it becomes aware of new outlets or journalists. It will ~~also post releases online on the day of publication and, for most,~~ will also post links to the story on the most appropriate social media channels ~~(such as the Council's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok sites).~~
- 4.6 Briefings
- 4.6.1 The team will always attempt to accommodate journalists' requests for briefings with key Members or officers, provided there are no issues around confidentiality or sensitivity. Briefings can add important context and detail to stories, helping to achieve a more balanced result for the Council.
- 4.7 Council meetings
- 4.7.1 The Communications Team will work closely with departments in the development of relevant committee papers, and even if this is not required, departments will pass reports to main committees through the key Communications contacts for information as early as possible to reduce the risk that there will be insufficient time to prepare proactive communications or context around sensitive information. ~~The team will seek to ensure a relevant Communications officer will participate in Chair/Vice-Chair pre-meetings with officers prior to all service committee meetings, to identify relevant issues for media releases and for use on social media channels.~~
- 4.7.2 The media and public are free to film, record or photograph Council meetings, provided that they do not disrupt proceedings. The team encourages broadcasters, as a courtesy, to inform the communications unit in advance of any meetings they intend to record or film, due to the size of their equipment, so that it can suggest which part of the room they can film from. ~~Full Council meetings are broadcast live and the ambition is for more meetings to be live streamed, and the communications unit will publicise these broadcast meetings on the Council's YouTube channel.~~ **All Full Council and committee meetings held at the New Shire Hall offices are broadcast live and stored on the Council's YouTube channel.**

#### 4.8 Campaigns/Consultations

4.8.1 The team will work with departments and Council committees to develop an annual campaigns and communications service plan to market and promote the Council's key objectives. It will also provide communications support to consultation and engagement related to major Council projects. These activities will use market segmentation to reach the most appropriate audiences and will be based on Citizen First: Digital First principles wherever possible.

#### 4.9 Strategic issues

4.9.1 It is recognised that the Council faces a number of strategic issues across the authority as a whole, and the Communications team will maintain regular consultation with the administration to ensure that these are fully integrated in the communications strategy on a continuing basis.

### 5. Organisation

Information from the Council is organised in the following distinct ways.

#### 5.1 News Releases

5.1.1 News releases deal with substantial news matters that the Council wants to promote, publicise or explain. They will often arise from items being raised or considered by Members, Member decisions, important visits, and matters of policy, or a wide range of external matters. These will always carry contacts for comment from all groups represented on committees in order of Member responsibility (Chair, Vice-Chair, other administration Spokes, opposition Spokes).

5.1.2 The Council's releases are targeted to the most relevant media outlets covering the geographical area or specialism, or to the channel most appropriate to the audience. The team will avoid issuing releases to all media outlets regardless of content, as this form of blanket issue leads to loss of credibility.

#### 5.2 Public Information Notices

5.2.1 Public information notices provide important, factual information about normal day-to-day activities of the Council and are both issued to the media proactively and published on the Council's website to share advice and provide data. They include matters such as road works and closures, minor emergencies (such as the temporary closure of offices, schools or other premises to which the public normally have access), and basic event information. These will carry officer or communications contacts only.

#### 5.3 News Statements

- 5.3.1 Written statements are principally used in respect of sensitive issues to be sure that the Council's position cannot be open to possible misinterpretation or misrepresentation. These will carry communications contacts only.
- 5.4 Reactive Comments
- 5.4.1 On reactive communications, the team still works on the principle of 'no surprises' but will also look to be proportionate. Therefore, if approached for comment on a significant issue affecting the Council it will liaise with the most appropriate officer to develop the answer and ~~seek comment or approval~~ **highlight to relevant members. Approval will only be sought on the most politically sensitive issues** from the most appropriate Councillor (usually the Leader or Deputy Leader, or the most appropriate Committee Chair/Vice-Chair).
- 5.4.2 Reactive statements will not usually be circulated to all Members, but where a written response is made linked to a significant issue or to Council policy it will be sent to Committee Chairs/Vice-Chairs, opposition Spokes or Local Member(s) where appropriate.
- 5.4.3 If the team is approached for comment on an ongoing issue where previous statements have been approved, or on a purely operational matter (dates, times, confirmation of issues, confirmation of responsibilities, follow up on proactive media releases or campaigns, etc.), it will not usually involve Members.
- 5.5 Campaigns
- 5.5.1 Behaviour change is one of the primary functions of local government communications, helping to improve the quality of life for Cambridgeshire people, and helping the Council to deliver its services or to run more effectively, as well as save taxpayer's money.
- 5.5.2 The Communications team will develop an annual plan of proactive campaigns to support the Council delivering its ambitions through behavioural change campaigns, which it will support in detail. These will be agreed with the appropriate service department and committee Chair/Vice-Chair, or the Leader/Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
- 5.5.3 These campaigns will be based on behavioural science insight and will be appropriately resourced, targeted and monitored. In order to run these successfully, they will be limited to areas of greatest priority for the Council. They may be constant (e.g. fostering or social work recruitment), annual (e.g. vaccination uptake), or related to specific issues (e.g. publicising the census or elections).
- 5.5.4 Other campaigns throughout the year may be supported by the team in a 'light touch' manner (e.g. retweeting/sharing materials on the Council's social media platforms from organisations whose aims support those of the Council, or highlighting these campaigns to Council staff and stakeholders through internal routes).

- 5.5.5 The Leader, Deputy Leader, Committee Chairs or Vice-Chairs will act as the lead spokes for any campaign launch, or will be quoted in campaign review materials. Professional comment (e.g. around the specific need for more foster carers) may come from the lead officer.
- 5.6 Political quotes and named media contacts
- 5.6.1 Any quotes on matters relating to the development of Council policies will always come from the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council ~~on a 2:1 ratio basis across the year~~, or the most appropriate Committee Chair / Vice-Chair. This principle will also apply to any letters written for publication.
- 5.6.2 Where appropriate, quotes from other members will be included in a news release. This may be the Chair of the Council on civic matters, or the Leader / Deputy Leader of the Council on matters which relate to the leadership of the Council, but will most often be the Chair or Vice-Chair of the relevant committee with responsibility for the area concerned.
- 5.6.3 Where a news release specifically relates to an issue affecting a particular area or geographical division, the Communications unit will advise the Local Member(s) early, their contact details will be added to the release, beneath those of the political leads, and they will be sent the release prior to or simultaneously with distribution to the local media.
- 5.6.4 Where the release is non-controversial, and concerns a local issue that a Local Member is particularly connected or involved with, they may be invited to include a quote in addition to, but not supersede, a quote from the Committee Chair.
- 5.6.5 **All Senior officers will approve the technical content of the release, but any quotes should be cleared with the named person before use.**
- 5.6.6 In the event of situations where an appropriate Member's quote is needed and the Member is unavailable, the appropriate Group Leader will be contacted for clearance. Officers will not normally approve Members' quotes except where a time constraint makes this inevitable, in which case at least one member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), in addition to the Communications team, must approve the quote.
- 5.6.7 In all cases, the names and contact details for the Spokes of all political groups on the committee will be included on press releases, in order of committee responsibility (Chair, Vice-Chair, other administration Spokes, opposition Spokes).
- 5.6.8 The relevant departmental/officer contact will also be included, followed by that of the Communications team's main number and out of hours contacts.



- 5.6.9 The Chair of the Council (and in their absence, the Vice-Chair) has an important part to play in ceremonial events carried out on behalf of the Council. Their activities will be published and publicised as appropriate.
- 5.6.10 Officers will respond to media requests for interviews/information on matters involving the giving of background technical or practical operational information, non-policy matters, matters involving the implementation of policies or matters of professional responsibility. Officers can be used as lead spokes when the Council's reputation can be enhanced by use of an expert, such as the Director of Public Health talking about health issues.
- 5.6.11 In both cases above, ~~approval will be sought in advance from the~~ **Communications team will make** the appropriate Chair/Vice-Chair **aware**, ~~or where there are urgent requests or in an emergency situation from the Chief Executive or the appropriate member of CLT.~~
- 5.7 Speaking on behalf of the Council
- 5.7.1 Officers who are directly approached by a member of the media for a comment on Council activities should not answer questions themselves. The journalist should be referred to the Communications team, which will manage the response and gain political sign off where appropriate.
- 5.7.2 Councillors who are directly approached by a member of the media ~~may wish to~~ **should** refer the enquiry on to the Communications team, ~~or make use of the guidance contained in this protocol to answer the enquiry themselves~~ **alternatively highlight the approach to the team before they answer to discuss their response. This will enable support to be given around providing accurate and up to date information, and will guard them against breaching any ongoing proceedings.** ~~It is helpful, if~~ **If they plan to answer directly, for them to they should make use of the guidance contained in this protocol about ensuring accuracy, confidentiality constraints, logging and recording both the approach and their answer. They should then** advise the Communications unit **at the earliest opportunity** in case of media follow-up, **to ensure consistency in providing answers to other media outlets.**
- 5.7.3 Officers and Councillors who have contact with the media in a personal capacity or as members of non-Council related organisations must not refer to their Council posts and must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the non-Council related organisation.
- 5.7.4 Trade union officers, who are employees of the Council and who have contact with the media in their trade union or political capacity, must make clear that they are speaking as a union or political group representative.
- 5.8 Social Media

A social media protocol, which is published on the Council’s website, sets out the Council’s general approach to the use of social media channels.

- 5.8.1 The Council will use the most appropriate social media channels, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Whatsapp to promote its news or key campaign messages, in addition to conventional media. The Communications unit is responsible for the Council’s main channels and has the discretion to write and post material without clearance, provided it is in line with the social media protocol, based on an approved approach around a subject and the Council’s key messages.
  - 5.8.2 The team would remind staff and Members who use social media that reporters and the public will view their posts and use them in stories. The team would encourage them (and provide training where necessary), to ensure that their social media activity could not be used to damage the reputation of the Council.
  - 5.8.3 It is recognised that there is a rapidly changing media landscape whereby most people receive their news through social media and where the best impact is made through speed of response. The Communications team will seek to identify potential issues and stories in advance where possible, to enable social media posts in real time where possible, but reflecting the requirements of this protocol.
6. Protocols
- 6.1 Issuing of agendas
    - 6.1.1 All committee papers will be made available to the media a minimum of five working days before the meeting concerned and posted on the internet by Democratic Services.
  - 6.2 Media attendance at meetings
    - 6.2.1 Members of the media must be provided with any additional papers which may have been issued on the day.
  - 6.3 Motions and questions
    - 6.3.1 Motions and questions from individual Councillors shown on the agenda will not be publicised through Council news releases in the interests of fairness.
  - 6.4 Reporting debates
    - 6.4.1 If a member of the media has not attended a meeting and wants to find out what was said during a debate at a meeting that wasn’t broadcast, officers will direct them to the appropriate Committee Chair directly and offer to provide opposition contacts. Staff from the Communications team will report back to the media on any decision/recommendation reached.

- 6.4.2 Journalists are free to tweet or post from Council meetings and members of the Communications unit will only tweet factual decisions made by committees and Full Council depending on the newsworthiness of the issue being debated.
- 6.4.3 Live broadcasting from Council meetings is permitted and the Council itself live streams ~~the all~~ Full Council **and committee** meetings on its YouTube channel, which the Communications Team will publicise.
- 6.5 Embargoes
- 6.5.1 Embargoes should be used sparingly. This would most typically be when a news release is linked to a launch event; when an issue of confidentiality requires it; or when a third party requires it (e.g. the announcement of an award or additional funding).
- 6.5.2 Embargoes are not legally enforceable and are adhered to by general local agreement.
- 6.6 Communications during the pre-election period
- 6.6.1 The Council follows the guidelines set out in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Government Publicity, which states:
- The period between the notice of election and the election itself, publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published by local authorities during this period unless expressly authorised by or under statute.
- 6.6.2 No Councillors will be quoted in any releases during the period outlined above when the Council itself is holding an election or if they are involved in elections for other authorities.
- 6.6.3 Wider publicity initiatives also need to be considered carefully during this period. The Code states that:
- Local authorities should not publish any publicity on controversial issues or report views or proposals in such a way that that identifies them with any Members or groups of Members.
- 6.6.4 Any prospective candidates (parliamentary, county and district) requesting visits to Council premises must always be treated equally. Council staff should not be included in any photographs that candidates might arrange, to avoid any impression of one party being favoured over another. Council offices should not be used to host political events during this time, unless these premises are available for general hire.
- 6.6.5 Further guidance to officers and members is available from the Council's document on Election Guidance agreed with Chief Officers and Group Leaders before the May 2021 elections.

## 6.7 Letters for Publication

- 6.7.1 The Communications team will, in consultation with the appropriate service director or Committee Chair, consider drafting replies to letters and articles about the Council or its services that appear in the printed or online media and help draw up letters for publication, if appropriate. In such cases, the Committee Chair concerned will sign the letter or agree who else is best to respond.
- 6.7.2 Group Leaders will consider and deal with any response to letters or comments which are clearly political in nature and, while the Communications team may flag these to the relevant group, they will not be involved in the drawing up or issuing of any response.
- 6.7.3 The Council's Officers' Code of Conduct states that all contact with the media should be conducted through, or in consultation with, the Communications team. If an employee wishes to write to a newspaper in their position as a Council employee, they must first obtain permission from their senior manager or Head of Service.

## 6.8 Dealing with Confidential Items

- 6.8.1 Under the Local Government Act 2007, a written record of all key decisions and other executive decisions made by the Council must be made publicly available 'as soon as practicable' after the meeting, even if the decision has been taken as an exempt item. This could be when the minutes of the meeting are available, but could equally be much sooner after the decision has been taken.
- 6.8.2 The Communications team will always seek to give the outcome of an issue taken in confidential session, unless there are over-riding reasons not to do so, such as the handling of personal and sensitive issues affecting staff or clients, or financial and commercial issues.
- 6.8.3 In these circumstances, officers should liaise with the department concerned before deciding the best course of action to follow and clear the approach with the Monitoring Officer and Chair of the relevant committee.

## 6.9 Emergency Communications

- 6.9.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to warn and inform local people in emergency situations to help minimise risk and harm.
- 6.9.2 The Communications team is a member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Warn and Inform Communications subgroup.
- 6.9.3 In emergency circumstances, the normal media approvals process may not apply. The Communications Team Leader will approve media activity in consultation with the Chief Executive or relevant 'gold' or 'silver' command.

## 6.10 Media / Social Media Training

- 6.10.1 In an organisation comprising 61 elected Members and approximately 4,000 employees it would be impossible and impractical for all communications from or about the Council to be produced and issued by the Communications team.
- 6.10.2 While all high profile and sensitive communications, or those most closely supporting the Council's objectives, will be led and developed by the team, part of its role will be supporting elected Members and Council staff who have responsibility to be good communicators as part of their role.
- 6.10.3 The Communications team will provide training to Councillors and staff which encourages a positive relationship in communicating with their communities and the media, and provides information on the best ways to get their information across.
- 6.11 Fostering and Adoption
- 6.11.1 Any media requests relating to filming/imagery of children in care requires director sign off. In no case will the Council allow external media interviews or any filming of any child in care who is under the age of 18 – although the ~~internal~~ team may develop case studies following interviews, using anonymised quotes.
- 6.11.2 In all cases with either partner videos or media interviews, foster carers must give their consent to be involved in the media/video case study process, and be clearly informed where any materials are going to be used and for how long.
- 6.11.3 The supporting Social Worker for that foster carer must also be informed and then a briefing must take place before any planned media activity.
- 6.11.4 A signed consent form will also be completed detailing all of this information, by external parties who work on the Council's behalf and by the Council.
7. Communication on Partnership Issues or Projects
- 7.1 Partnership working is a common feature of the Council's activities. It works closely with many public sector partners, in particular Peterborough City Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ~~Clinical Commissioning Group~~ **Integrated Care Board** and other local statutory bodies.
- 7.2 It remains the independent decision of the Council to take part or not to take part in joint communications and all partners should be informed in advance that the authority's agreement should be carefully sought and obtained in relation to any joint communications.
- 7.3 Where joint releases are issued (for instance around a joint response to ~~the Covid-19 pandemic~~ **a public health issue affecting the area**, or joint funding announcements from the Government), the team will use jointly branded communications headed paper and agree at the outset who the lead spokes will be. Where this is a project with another local government partner, it is likely to

involve quotes from the lead spokesperson for each authority. Media approaches for interview will be directed to the most appropriate place or spokes.

- 7.4 Communications protocols must be established with private sector contractors at the outset of major contracts, and this will be the responsibility of the lead department/officer involved in the contract, but should be overseen by the Communications department.
- 7.5 The protocols (template available) will set out responsibilities for which organisation takes the communications lead, frequency and type of communications, sign off and key spokespeople.

The template will, ensure that:

- The Council's role or contribution is identified appropriately and information to media or local residents includes quotes from named Council Members or officers.
- The Council logo is included with others on any documentation.
- The text of information is shared in draft stages between partners and approved by the relevant communications leads prior to distribution.
- The method, manner and timing of distribution are also agreed in advance by the relevant communications leads.
- Depending on the size of the project or partnership, the relevant Council committee Chair will be consulted as usual but may not be quoted where it is agreed that the Council is not the lead agency and in the interests of producing succinct media releases.
- Wherever possible, news releases should be issued on joint paper, with contact details for each organisation.

## 8. Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)

8.1 Where the GCP is concerned, agreed communication protocols are already in place, as agreed by the GCP Executive Board on which all partners are represented.

8.2 The key elements are as follows:

- Pro-active communications will, as far as possible, be planned and devised in consultation with the relevant partner agency/ies, via the subject experts (usually an officer) or, in the event of unavailability, through the communications lead.
- Requests for information and/or comments to Members/officers will clearly state the deadline for a response.

- Pro-active and re-active statements will, as far as possible, be seen and approved by the GCP Executive Board Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson who will act as talking heads.

8.3 Inevitably, to maximise an opportunity or to avoid a communications vacuum, there will be occasions when a statement or response needs to be issued dynamically or swiftly to a deadline. It is recognised that, on such occasions, the GCP Programme Director, Communications Manager and/or partners' communications leads will have authority to speak on behalf of the GCP, in good faith, and adhering to the communications principles set out in their strategy, ensuring the GCP Executive Board Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson and relevant officers are kept informed.

8.4 On occasion, it will be relevant for the lead agency to issue a communication which is linked to the GCP programme. In this event, the agency should liaise with the GCP Communications Manager / Programme Director prior to publication.

9. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

9.1 ~~Collaboration on a case-by-case basis on any specific activity until a formal communications protocol is established.~~ **The Council works closely with the Combined Authority in a number of ways, both as a partner organisation involved in the overarching development of public services for people in Cambridgeshire, including transport, education and skills and economic development, and also through being commissioned to deliver specific projects to make infrastructure improvements funded by the Combined Authority.**

9.2 **Both organisations will work on the basis of 'no surprises' on communications issues that affect them both, sharing approaches from media outlets and proposed responses in advance.**

9.3 **Pro-active communications for projects funded by the Combined Authority, but delivered by the Council, will be planned and devised in consultation between the two authorities via a communications plan which will identify such things as agreed key messages, use of spokespeople, and which organisation will take the lead on issuing statements, putting forward members or officers to be quoted/used for interviews.**

- **Communications plans for funded projects will also clearly identify the communications involvement of any external contractors, who will not issue independent communications on projects without the approval of the lead authority's communications team.**
- **Spokespeople on projects undertaken by the Council on behalf of the Combined Authority will largely be the chair (or vice-chair in their absence) of the relevant committee, unless previously agreed.**

- **Pro-active and re-active statements on projects will, as far as possible, be seen and any relevant quotes approved for the Council by the chair, or the vice-chair in their absence, of the relevant committee, and highlighted to the Combined Authority’s Communications team in advance of issue.**

**9.4 Communications on overarching strategy or policy involving or affecting both organisations, after approval by the relevant Chief Executives, will be seen and quotes/direction approved by the Mayor of the Combined Authority and the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, who will act as lead spokespeople for interview.**

**9.5 To maximise opportunities or to avoid communications vacuums, there will inevitably be occasions when a statement or response needs to be issued dynamically or swiftly to a deadline. It is recognised that, on such occasions, these will be approved by the Chief Executive of either the Combined Authority or the Council and their Communications lead, but will be shared with each other before issue.**

**9.6 On occasion, it will be relevant for the Council to issue a communication which is linked to Combined Authority activity outside project work or major government announcements (for example, referencing activity in a committee report which is proactively publicised). In this event, the Council should liaise with the Combined Authority’s Communications Manager or Programme Director prior to publication.**

10. Communications Support for Schools

10.1 Practical support for schools is offered in times of particular difficulties or success. This is a traded service primarily for local authority maintained schools and the support can be in the form of general advice and guidance, media releases, supporting with letters to parents, fielding media calls, media briefings and news conferences. However in the event of a significant issue the team will work with Academy Trusts to support schools in times of major crisis and where the reputation of the Council as the local education authority would otherwise be put at risk.

10.2 In general terms:

- The content of all media releases or statements will be cleared in advance with the Headteacher and, if possible, the Chair of Governors (or where necessary the head of the academy trusts).
- Any media release will make it clear it is being issued on behalf of the school concerned and headed with the name of the school governing body as appropriate.
- Relevant school contact names and numbers will be included on any release except where prior agreement has been reached that



Communications team staff should field all calls in the first instance.

- The Chair of the Children and Young People Committee and the director with responsibility for Education will be kept fully informed on media issues affecting schools in line with the 'no surprises' principle and statements will be shared with the local Member as they are issued.
- Where schools are not buying into the traded service, communications support will still be offered at an agreed hourly rate.