

1.04 – MEDIA POLICY

1 POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish central points of contact, protocols and a consistent method for managing communication between Council and the print, broadcast, web based and social media platforms to ensure coordinated, accurate and reliable presentation.

2 POLICY OBJECTIVE

Council is accountable to the community for its performance and recognises the key role the media plays in Council transparency and facilitating effective communication between Council and the community. This policy seeks to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided to the media in a way which is professional, enhances Council’s public image, limits the possibility of misinformation and maintains positive relations with the media.

3 POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to all Councillors and Council staff.

4 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Council	Norfolk Island Regional Council.
Councillors	Councillors refer to all elected representatives of the Norfolk Island Regional Council.
General Manager	A person who holds an appointment under section 334 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) (NI)</i> . This includes a person acting in this position.
<i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI)</i>	<i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI)</i> defines the governing body (S222) and its role (S223), together with defining the responsibilities of Councillors (including the Mayor) as members of a governing body (S232) but also as an individual and an elected representative of the community (S232). The additional duties of the Mayor’s role are also defined (S226).
Social Media	Means online platforms and applications, such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards, that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia

TERM	DEFINITION
Staff	For the purposes of this policy includes employees and delegates such as agency staff and contractors.

5 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Legislation, Policies and Documents:

Legislation:

- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) (NI)
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* (NSW)(NI)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth)
- *Archives Act 1983* (Cth)

Policies:

- Councillor Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy

Documents:

- Councillor Handbook
- Norfolk Island Regional Council Model Code of Conduct
- Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct

6 IMPLEMENTATION

Communication

This policy and associated documents are to be communicated to all staff and the community via Council's external website and intranet.

7 POLICY STATEMENT

7.1 Engaging with the Media

7.1.1 Overview

The General Manager is the official spokesperson for the Council on operational and administrative matters. The General Manager may delegate to other council staff to speak on their behalf where appropriate, (for example, where the delegated staff member has professional expertise regarding the subject matter, or the General Manager is unavailable).

The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body of the Council, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities (section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) (NI).

If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the Council's spokesperson. The Mayor may delegate their role as spokesperson to other councillors where appropriate, (for example, where another councillor is best placed to comment, because the issue is of particular interest to them, or it is within their particular area of expertise).

7.1.2 Councillors

As a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community, councillors are free to express their personal views to the media.

When engaging with the media councillors:

- Must not purport to speak for Council unless authorised to do so;
- Must clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual councillor and that they are not speaking for Council (unless authorised to do so);
- Must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council;
- Must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so, and
- Must seek information and guidance from the General Manager where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.

In the interests of promoting a positive, safe and harmonious organisational culture, councillors should endeavour to resolve personal differences privately and must not prosecute them publicly through the media.

Where councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information immediately to the General Manager.

Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this policy to the General Manager.

7.1.3 Council Staff

Council staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to Council unless authorised by the General Manager/Media Coordinator to do so.

If Council staff receive a media enquiry or they are invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to the Council, they must refer the enquiry to the General Manager.

Council staff are free to express their personal views to the media on matters that do not relate to the Council, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on Council or that bring it into disrepute.

If authorised to speak to the media, Council staff must:

- Uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council;
- Not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so by the General Manager, and
- Seek information and guidance from the General Manager where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.

Where Council staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the General Manager.

7.1.4 Tone

All media engagement by council staff and councillors must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner.

7.1.5 Induction and Training

Council will provide training to any Council staff who engage or are authorised to engage with the media. Media engagement training will be provided to councillors as part of their induction or refresher training or as part of their ongoing professional development.

7.2 Standards of Conduct when Engaging with the Media

Councillors and Council staff must comply with Council's model code of conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official. Councillors and Council staff must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:

- Are defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public
- Contains profane language or is sexual in nature;
- Constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory;
- Is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by the Council to ensure workplace health and safety;
- Contains content about Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive;
- Divulges confidential Council information;
- Breaches the privacy of other council officials or members of the public;
- Contains allegations of suspected breaches of Council's model code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW;
- Could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment;
- Commits Council to any action;
- Violates an order made by a court;
- Breaches copyright; and
- Advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

7.3 Use of Media During Emergencies

During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the General Manager will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of Council.

Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

Training on media engagement during emergencies will be provided to councillors and relevant staff and other Council officials as required.

7.4 Media Engagement in the Lead up to Elections

This policy does not prevent the mayor or councillors who are candidates at a council or any other election from providing comment to the media in their capacity as candidates at the election.

Any media comment provided by the mayor or councillors who are candidates at a council or another election must not be provided in an advertisement, newspaper column, or a radio or television broadcast paid for by council or produced by council or with council resources.

7.5 Record Keeping Requirements

Media content created and received by Councillors and Council staff acting in their official capacity is a council record and may be subject to information access applications made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)*.

These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983 (Cth)* and Council's approved records management policies and procedures.

8 MONITORING AND REPORTING

The monitoring and evaluation of the policy will be conducted on an annual basis by the Responsible Officer.

9 REVIEW AND VERSION CONTROL

Policy Number:	1.04	Responsible Officer:	General Manager
Next Review Date:	June 2026		
Version:	Resolution Number:	Effective Date:	Description:
1.0	15/16	20 July 2016	Developed and adopted
2.0	2023/56	07 June 2023	Reviewed and adopted
3.0	N/A	13 May 2024	This policy has been reviewed and approved under delegation, as no changes were proposed.