



WAVERLEY
COUNCIL

Media Policy



Department	Communications and Engagement
Approved by	Council
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Relevant legislation	Local Government Act 1993
Related policies/ procedures/guidelines	Council's Code of Conduct Media Policy 2024 Council's Records Management Policy
Related forms	

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1. Principles

- 1.1 We, the councillors, staff, and other officials of Waverley Council, are committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of media engagement:

Openness We will ensure that we promote an open exchange of information between our council and the media.

Consistency We will ensure consistency by all councillors and staff when communicating with the media.

Accuracy The information we share with the media will be a source of truth for our council and community and we will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur.

Timeliness We will ensure that we respond to media enquiries in a timely manner.

2. Appointment and the role of the Senior Media Advisor

- 2.1 The General Manager will appoint a member of council staff to be the Council's Senior Media Advisor. The Senior Media Advisor should be a suitably qualified member of staff.
- 2.2 The General Manager may appoint more than one Senior Media Advisor.
- 2.3 The Senior Media Advisor's role is to:
- a) be the lead point of contact for all media enquiries, requests for interviews, requests to film or photograph council staff, facilities or events for news and current affairs purposes
 - b) be responsible for preparing all media statements prior to their release
 - c) liaise with relevant staff members within the organisation where appropriate.
 - d) ensure that media statements are approved by the Mayor and/or General Manager prior to their release
 - e) develop and/or approve media training and/or induction to be provided to relevant staff and/or councillors
 - f) maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses
 - g) ensure that media organisations and their representatives are treated professionally, equally and without bias
 - h) ensure that media enquiries are dealt with promptly

- i) provide guidance to councillors approached by the media for comment to avoid communication of misinformation, and
- j) ensure that all media releases are published on the Council's website.

3. Who can engage with the media

The General Manager

- 3.1 The General Manager is the official spokesperson for the Council on operational and administrative matters.
- 3.2 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

- 3.3 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).
- 3.4 If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor should act as the Council's spokesperson.
- 3.5 If the Deputy Mayor is unavailable, 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).

Councillors

- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 When engaging with the media councillors:
 - (a) must not purport to speak for the Council unless authorised to do so.
 - (b) should clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual councillor and that they are not speaking for the Council (unless authorised to do so)
 - (c) must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
 - (d) must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so, unless the information is in the public domain and
 - (e) may seek information and guidance from the Senior Media Advisor 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.

- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 Where councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should endeavour to provide this information to the Senior Media Advisor.

Council Staff

- 3.10 Council staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to the Council unless authorised by the Senior Media Advisor to do so.
- 3.11 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 Senior Media Advisor.
- 3.12 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 the Council or that bring it into disrepute.
- 3.13 If authorised to speak to the media, Council staff:
- (a) must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
 - (b) must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so by the Senior Media Advisor, and
 - (c) must seek information and guidance from the Senior Media Advisor 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.
- 3.14 Where Council staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Senior Media Advisor.
- 3.15 Where the Senior Media Advisor or relevant Director becomes aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Mayor.

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- 3.16 All media engagement by council officials must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner.

Induction and Training

- 3.17 The Council must provide training to Council officials who engage or are authorised to engage with the media.
- 3.18 Media engagement training will be provided to councillors as part of their induction or refresher training or as part of their ongoing professional development program, with professional development costs incurred to be paid from the councillors' professional development budget.

Councillor's questions about media engagement

- 3.19 Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this policy to the Senior Media Advisor.

4. Standards of conduct when engaging with the media

- 4.1 Council officials must comply with the Council's code of conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official.
- 4.2 Council officials must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that could reasonably be considered to:
- a) be defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other Council officials or members of the public
 - b) contain profane language or is sexual in nature
 - c) constitute harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory
 - d) be 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
 - e) contain content about the Council, Council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - f) divulge confidential Council information
 - g) breach the privacy of other Council officials or members of the public
 - h) contain allegations of suspected breaches of the Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model
 - i) be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment
 - j) commit the Council to any action
 - k) violate an order made by a court
 - l) breach copyright
 - m) advertise, endorse, or solicit commercial products or business.

5. Use of media during emergencies

- 5.1 During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Senior Media Advisor

and Communications and Engagement Manager will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of the Council in conjunction with the Mayor.

- 5.2 Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.
- 5.3 Training on media engagement during emergencies will be provided to councillors and relevant staff and other Council officials.

6. Media engagement in the lead up to elections

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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 the council or produced by the council or with council resources.

7. Records management requirements

- 7.1 Media content created and received by council officials (including councillors) acting in their official capacity is a council record and may be subject to information access applications made under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 and the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

8. Definitions

- 8.1 Media content created and received by council officials (including councillors) acting in their official capacity is a council record and may be subject to information access applications made under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 and the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

Term	Definition
<i>Council official</i>	in the case of a council – means councillors, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of the council); in the case of a county council – means members, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of

the council); in the case of a joint organisation – means voting representatives, members of staff and delegates of the joint organisation (including members of committees that are delegates of the joint organisation)

<i>Social Media Advisor</i>	Means a person appointed under clause 1.3 of this policy
<i>media</i>	means print, broadcast and online media used for communicating information to the public, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio, and television broadcasters
<i>personal information</i>	means information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion
<i>social media</i>	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, YouTube, Instagram and Wikipedia

9. Review of Policy

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed every four years or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements. The policy may also be changed as a result of other amendments. Any amendments to a community facing policy must be way of a Council resolution, and any amendments to an organisational facing policy must be approved by the General Manager.
- 9.2 Council staff and members of the public may provide feedback about this document by emailing communications@waverley.nsw.gov.au.