

1.4 Media Protocols for Officers and Councillors

The following basic principles cover most situations:

(a) No officer of Islington Council (with the exception of the Heads of either political group office) should proactively or reactively speak directly to the media concerning any matter relating to council business without prior consultation with the Communications team. It is permissible for other officers in the political offices to receive information or take a message for the Head of the office from a representative of the media. It is permissible for the Heads of the political offices to identify another officer in their political office to cover for them as the office media contact in their absence on leave, provided this is notified in advance to the Monitoring Officer and the Communications team. Exchanging greetings with media representatives as a matter of courtesy is acceptable for all officers.

(b) No officer shall write or disseminate information intended for publication on behalf of, or claiming to be representing, Islington Council without prior consultation with the Communications team. (For information on union representatives, see the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations in Part 5)

Deleted: , or

(c) The appropriate spokespeople for the council when the subject is about policy or is politically controversial is the relevant councillor. The relevant councillor will be the one who holds the relevant official council position, e.g. relevant executive portfolio holder or the committee chair. (For more detail on which councillors act as spokespeople for council policies and committees, refer to information in the remainder of this section). The Code says that all publicity should be objective and explanatory, and whilst it may acknowledge the part played by individual councillors as holders of particular positions in the council, personalisation of issues or personal image making should be avoided.

Deleted: b

Deleted: practice when identifying

Deleted: is that

Deleted: it will

Deleted: be

(d) If the subject is technical or operational, the relevant officer is the appropriate spokesperson.

Deleted: c

Deleted: it will be

Deleted: (For more detail on which councillors act as spokespeople for council policies and committees, refer to information in the remainder of this section).

1.5 Councillors

The Media Relations Procedures and Protocols do not restrict an elected councillor's prerogative to issue their own media releases, in the name of, and via their party political office. Likewise, councillors are free to speak directly with the media. Councillors should be clear whether they are commenting on behalf of the council, themselves or their party. Councillors should only comment on behalf of the council where they hold a formal council position relevant to the issue, e.g. an Executive member or chair of a committee.

Where a media representative requests an interview with a specific councillor through the Communications Team, the Communications Team will give out the agreed public contact details. This may be the relevant political office. The Communications Team will also try and contact councillors to make them aware of the media interest. Again this could be through the relevant political office.

1.6 Executive Members

Executive members may be asked to give interviews to the media in respect of matters which have been decided by the Executive or which fall within their portfolios.

They may be featured in individual publicity where it is relevant to their portfolios, and provided that the principles set out in 1.2 and 1.3 are adhered to. Where an executive member is on leave or unable to attend a particular event, another executive member may stand in for them as spokesperson or to attend an event.

Deleted: (or the portfolio of a fellow executive member for whom they are standing in at an event)

1.7 Area, Audit, Licensing, Planning and Overview and Review and Standards Committees

These committees take important decisions and a great many of these directly affect people's lives, which reinforces the need for factual, objective, accessible and accurate information to be disseminated to the public through the media. The Communications Team will publicise the work of the Area, Audit, Overview and Review and Licensing and Standards committees by conveying factual information on important decisions and the reasons (in line with the council's policies in these areas) for decisions taken at the committees.

Deleted: key

The appropriate council spokespeople for the Area, Audit, Overview and Review, Planning, Licensing and Standards committees are the chairs of those committees. The chairs of the committees should be quoted in all media materials and should approve any quote on any issues pertaining to their committees. The chairs should have final approval on all written media materials pertaining to their committees. This is regardless of their political party or whether they are members of the opposition.

There may be times when members of these committees disagree with each other. If necessary the media office will convey information on matters such as outcomes and details of votes but will not disseminate information on the nature of disagreements between members of the Area, Audit, Planning, Licensing and Standards committees.

Deleted: processes

The Communications Team will not feature individual members in publicity about the Area, Audit, Overview and Review and Planning, Licensing and Standards committees except where they represent the Area, Audit, Planning, Licensing and Standards committees in a formal capacity such as the chair.

1.8 Opposition and Ward Councillors

There may be occasions when the Communications Team will receive requests for opposition members to speak to the media on a story and/or issue. There might also be occasions when it is necessary or appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition to speak to the media. Where publicity is given to a council project or initiative which affects a particular area, community or neighbourhood, the relevant ward's councillors should normally be invited to attend launches and photo calls organised by the Council, although not as spokespeople; they should be contacted either directly using their published contact details or via the Mayor and Members' secretariat. The provisions of the Code will apply to any comment by a Councillor included in any council-issued press statement.

Deleted: and/or the Green Party and independent members

The Communications Team will advise all councillors on media relations but cannot support councillors on media relations in respect of views which do not reflect council policies or that affect public support for a political party or the promotion of individual councillors.

1.9 Group Offices

Heads of Group offices should ensure that their names do not appear in external publications (as contact names) and that political office facilities are not made available to non-council members, whether for campaigning or otherwise.

If staff are unsure as to whether they should or should not be doing particular areas of work they should check with the Head of Democratic Services, Director of Legal and Human Resource Services or the Corporate Director of Resources.

Deleted: .

1.10 The Mayor

The Mayor is the first citizen of the London Borough of Islington and represents all citizens in the borough irrespective of party lines whilst in office. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor represent Islington Council at many civic and ceremonial events in the London Borough of Islington and elsewhere. For the avoidance of doubt, he or she may continue to do so in this capacity during the period between the publication of notice of election and the date of poll.

Deleted:

When acting in their civic or ceremonial capacity the Mayor and Deputy Mayor shall not make political statements.

Where capacity in the Communications Team to assist and support the Mayor's office is limited, priority will be given to those events that most closely tie in with council's strategic objectives and priorities and to those that most closely meet the main purposes of local authority communications (as set out in 1.3).