

MEDIA POLICY

October 2018

Responsible Directorate: Customer Experience and Business Transformation - Strategic Communications

Authorised by: Council

Date of adoption: 22 October 2018

Review by: October 2021

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1. Our Values	3
1.2. Purpose	3
1.3. Scope	3
2. Background.....	4
2.1. Context	4
2.2. Corporate framework	4
3. Policy Statement.....	5
3.1 Guiding Principles	5
4. Key Accountabilities	7
4.1 Media enquiries	8
4.2 Approaching the media	9
4.3 Letters	9
4.4 Crisis media	10
5. Implementation and monitoring	11
5.1. Accountabilities	11
5.2. Related documents	11
5.3. Definitions	11
5.4. Financial implications	11

1. Introduction

1.1. Our Values

We have six values - with 'think customer' and 'act with integrity', being at the centre of everything we do and our new leadership framework describes and sets expectations for our leaders. Our values and behaviours guide the way we work and lead.

How we work	How we lead
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think Customer experience• Act with integrity• Work together as one• Explore better ways• Treat people with respect• Own it, follow through	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead by personal example• Build trust• Create shared direction• Inspire possibility• Empower others

1.2. Purpose

Council's Media Policy guides our relationship with the news media and specifies internal procedures for dealing with media requests, including who is authorised to respond to media enquiries and on what issues.

1.3. Scope

This policy provides guidance to councillors, staff and contractors in their contact with news media outlets and journalists.

2. Background

Communicating with the media plays a large role in Council's dialogue with its community. All media interaction is undertaken broadly to enhance or protect the City of Boroondara's reputation. Media coverage influences community perceptions, informs residents of Council position and activities and applies a level of scrutiny to Council's functions. It is essential to have clear policy guidance on media relations available to staff and elected representatives to guide day-to-day interactions with media.

2.1. Context

It is imperative that the City of Boroondara has a policy and practice framework which ensures Council is capable of keeping pace with the increasing immediacy of news.

The policy of having defined spokespeople and a centralised media contact has worked for Boroondara and this policy maintains that convention.

This policy is limited to dealings with mainstream media and where formal comment is made or sought. Social media practice is covered by the Social Media Policy for Councillors 2018 and the staff Social Media Policy 2013.

2.2. Corporate framework

This policy supports Council's Vision as stated in the Council Plan 2017-21: 'A vibrant and inclusive city, meeting the needs and aspirations of its community. It also aligns with the value statements in the Council Plan 2017-2021.

3. Policy Statement

The Strategic Communications Department is responsible for managing an ongoing media relations program as part of Boroondara's overall communication and engagement strategy.

This involves:

- identifying opportunities for positive media coverage in conjunction with other departments.
- developing strategies to advance and protect Council's reputation in the media.
- monitoring coverage of Council in the media.
- maintaining and creating relationships with media stakeholders.
- responding in a timely, open and transparent fashion to media enquiries.
- raising awareness in the community of services/facilities available and of issues being considered by Council.

The aim of these activities is to instill confidence that Council is representing community interests, functioning effectively and its processes are transparent.

3.1 Guiding Principles

This policy has at its foundation the following guiding principles:

1. Media communication is based upon a considered strategy with a clear understanding of audience, desired outcome, appropriate channel(s), impacts on community, government relationships, reputation management and legal liability.
2. All contact from the media seeking comment from councillors will be referred to the Strategic Communications Lead (or delegated media advisor) ahead of comment being made to ensure the considerations above have been addressed.
3. The primary audience for all media comment is the Boroondara community.
4. Media comment will not be used to promote staff or councillors' personal, business or political interests, including interests as a candidate in an election.
5. Media commentary will be tailored to the channel(s) being used.
6. All media commentary will be entirely consistent with any adopted or established Council position (when in place).
7. All media commentary will respect any decision taken by Council.
8. All councillors and the Strategic Communications Lead (or delegated media advisor) must be kept informed of any contact that has occurred with the media.
9. It is acknowledged that media issues can move quickly and direct discussions with the Mayor and councillor spokesperson will be required prior to advising all councillors of the media position taken on behalf of Council.

10. When a councillor comments using any media channel, their commentary may be perceived as being made as a councillor of the City of Boroondara irrespective of whether they use the title "Councillor" in their communication.
11. Any information or activities that may be considered a risk to Council's reputation should be identified and flagged with the Strategic Communications Lead (or delegated media advisor) and the CEO in advance of any public announcements. This provides an opportunity to plan proactive communications, along with key messages, a position statement, and an issues management strategy if required.

4. Key Accountabilities

Managing the media in both proactive and reactive settings requires the cooperation of many parties as outlined in the table below.

Person/s responsible	Accountability
Mayor	Primary spokesperson for the City of Boroondara on policy issues, citywide issues and intergovernmental issues, as well as major issues of community significance. The mayor may also choose to involve ward councillors where a matter is both of policy significance and significant within a specific ward.
Councillors	The relevant ward councillor is the spokesperson on ward-specific issues. Councillors should ensure that they are briefed on any position adopted by Council on the particular issue. Councillors should always seek to resolve any disagreement with Council's adopted position in discussion with their fellow councillors, and avoid pre-empting or prejudicing Council decisions by making public comment prematurely.
CEO	Provides guidance on the development of media responses and has ultimate accountability for media responses. Where media issues relate to administrative or staff performance issues, the CEO or delegated Director will respond. The CEO has discretion to approve in writing a specific exemption or variation to the application of this policy if recommended by the Manager People, Culture and Development with regard to the particular circumstances.
Directors	Provide guidance on the development of media responses and act as spokespeople for operational issues.
Strategic Communications Lead (supported by a delegated media advisor)	Primary point of contact for all media interaction. Develops media responses in collaboration with subject matter experts and Directors for approval by the CEO and Mayor as appropriate. Oversees all interactions with the news media.
Communications team members	Develop proactive media releases related to project or portfolio responsibilities. Support coordination of media responses.
Managers	Provide subject matter input in a timely manner to enable deadlines to be met on all media responses. Act as subject matter experts in the development of proactive media releases.

All other staff

Refer any direct media enquiries immediately to the Strategic Communications Lead or delegated media advisor. Under no circumstances may a staff member speak directly to the media.

4.1 Media enquiries

The Strategic Communications Lead will ensure all media activity is logged and monitored. Staff must direct all enquiries immediately to the Strategic Communications Lead (or delegated media advisor) where he/she will log the enquiry, determine the deadline and context (if possible), and send to the responsible Manager/s for a response. In collaboration with the Strategic Communications Lead (or delegated media advisor), the responsible Director has responsibility for the development of the response for final sign-off by the CEO.

It is acknowledged that early responses to media enquiries can assist in the management of the issue and give Council a stronger chance of putting its case forward earlier in the story. The media will often not wait for a delayed response and may publish a negative or skewed story in the absence of the requested information.

Enquiries of a ward-specific nature are to be forwarded to the relevant ward councillor, to allow him/her to contribute to the response within the given deadline should he or she have particular knowledge of the issue. After input from internal departments and councillors, the final response will be approved by the responsible Director and CEO. Details of all media enquiries and responses will be circulated to all Councillors weekly.

Requests for interviews or responses from student journalists will usually not be accommodated due to their time consuming nature. If appropriate, general information such as a link to relevant information on the website may be provided to assist the student.

4.2 Approaching the media

Proactive media coverage is the responsibility of the Strategic Communications Department. Communications will contact the media to seek coverage of a story in circumstances where:

- a positive news story is identified.
- it is decided that Council should release details of an event or development, for example, when there is a need for transparency and accountability to our community, or for community understanding of a current or developing issue, or when a matter is identified as being of importance to the community.

The Strategic Communications Department is responsible for issuing media releases and contacting journalists about potential stories in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

As part of the communications planning process, effective dialogue between managers and the Strategic Communications Department is necessary to identify story opportunities and schedule media events in a timely manner. A proactive and planned media schedule will help Council with effective short- and long-term communications planning.

4.3 Letters

Letters to the editor play a role in Council's media-relations activities. These letters can be used as a way to:

- correct misreporting of Council.
- respond to allegations made in previous letters to the editor.
- raise an issue of importance to the community.

When deciding whether to respond to an issue that has already received coverage by submitting a letter, the following should be considered:

- Is it advantageous to Council to extend coverage of the issue?
- Will continued coverage reflect poorly on Council's reputation?
- Are there more effective ways for Council to rebut points?
- Will the 'letters column' reach the relevant audience?

Councillors should bring any letters to the editor they propose to submit to the attention of the Strategic Communications Lead and obtain the appropriate advice and support. The Strategic Communications Lead will then ensure the CEO and relevant director are aware of the letter.

4.4 Crisis media

Crisis management plays a vital role in any effective media policy and generally involves:

- monitoring media coverage.
- identifying negative coverage and issues that could lead to negative coverage of Council activities.
- an integrated and strategic approach to dealing with the issue.

If a Councillor or officer becomes aware of an issue that has the potential to develop into a media issue, this should be brought to the attention of the relevant director or manager and the Strategic Communications Lead as soon as possible. The Strategic Communications Lead will then take this process forward and manage relevant activities in conjunction with appropriate stakeholders.

In the event of a crisis or unexpected issue, the Strategic Communications Lead will put appropriate crisis communication procedures into place to ensure Council's communication with the media is well managed.

These procedures include:

- immediately notifying the Mayor, CEO and relevant director of the situation.
- briefing frontline staff on the issue and providing them with an appropriate public response.
- informing the media that Council will provide a comment at a suitable time.
- implementing Council's Crisis Communication Plan.

The success of any crisis management plan is contingent upon all members of the organisation being well informed of the situation and following the principles outlined in this policy document. Protecting Council's reputation and legal and financial position should be a central focus of media crisis management, which should be directed towards achieving a positive outcome for Council.

5. Implementation and monitoring

5.1. Accountabilities

For all queries or feedback regarding this policy document, please contact the responsible officer below.

Contact	Contact number	Contact e-mail
Katherine Stakula	9278 4510	Katherine.stakula@Boroondara.vic.gov.au or media@boroondara.vic.au

The responsible officer coordinates the implementation, maintenance and review of this policy; ensuring stakeholders are aware of their accountabilities.

5.2. Related documents

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policies (for staff and councillors)
- Emergency management plans
- City of Boroondara Crisis Communication Plan

5.3. Definitions

Policy	A statement of principle/s that aligns with legislative, regulatory, or organisational requirements and articulates the Council's position on an area of its activities. Policies are implemented to ensure we create a culture in line with our values and to establish acceptable behaviours. Policies are endorsed by ELT and/or Council and may apply to all or parts of Council. Policies are developed to address legislative and/or government policy compliance, or to implement a strategic or operational goal, and are mandatory (non-discretionary) unless specifically authorised by the CEO.
--------	--

5.4. Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising as a result of this Policy.