

Parish Council Media & Television Engagement Risk Assessment

Approved By: Highnam Parish Council

Activity: Broadcast, Television, or Radio Media Interviews by Council Representatives.

1. Legal & Regulatory Risks

Risk 1.1: Defamation and Personal Libel Lawsuits

- **The Threat:** A councillor names, blames, or heavily implies wrongdoing by a specific resident, local developer, or business owner on camera.
- **Impact:** High (Personal and Council lawsuits; financial ruin).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Strict prohibition on naming individuals, staff, or companies.
 - Stick solely to adopted council statements: *"The council has resolved to review the application, but we cannot comment on individual parties."*
 - Council insurance will **not** cover independent, unauthorised defamatory statements.

Risk 1.2: Code of Conduct Breaches & Sanctions

- **The Threat:** A councillor uses a TV interview to bully, misrepresent the council, or bring the office of councillor into disrepute.
- **Impact:** Medium (Official monitoring officer investigation, public censure, forced apology).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Mandatory reference to the *Local Government Standards/Code of Conduct* framework within the media policy.
 - Any unauthorised interview triggers an automatic referral to the District/Borough Monitoring Officer.

Risk 1.3: Data Protection (GDPR) Violations

- **The Threat:** Revealing private resident information, sensitive correspondence, or ongoing enforcement details on camera.
- **Impact:** High (ICO investigation, severe financial penalties for the Council).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Zero discussion of individual casework or private complaints.
 - The Clerk must screen and clear all background documents visible in the interview location.

2. Operational & Staff Risks (The Clerk's Profile)

Risk 2.1: Staff Grievance and Constructive Dismissal

- **The Threat:** A councillor publicly criticises the Clerk or council staff on television regarding a local failure or delay.
- **Impact:** High (Employment tribunals, loss of the Proper Officer, collapse of council administration).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Absolute ban on discussing personnel, staffing levels, performance, or internal council grievances on air.
 - Explicitly state that staffing matters are confidential and handled only via the staffing committee.

Risk 2.2: Crisis Burden and Operational Burnout

- **The Threat:** An unscripted or poorly handled interview causes a massive influx of complaints, FOI requests, and follow-up press inquiries, paralysing the Clerk's daily duties.
- **Impact:** Medium (Administrative backlog, increased stress, unmanageable workload).
- **Control Measures:**
 - **The 48-Hour Press Pause:** The Clerk has the authority to route all follow-up media inquiries to a single, written-only inbox.
 - Hiring an external, temporary PR/Crisis handler if a television incident escalates out of hand.

3. Reputation & Political Risks

Risk 3.1: Misrepresentation of Council Policy (The "Personal View" Trap)

- **The Threat:** A councillor states their own highly passionate view on a local matter (e.g., a controversial planning application), but the TV station frames it as "The Parish Council's official stance."
- **Impact:** Medium/High (Public confusion, loss of council neutrality, potential legal challenges to planning decisions).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Unless explicitly voted on by the full council, the representative *cannot* give a personal view while identified as a councillor.

- Mandate the use of standard bridging phrases to return to agreed council resolutions.

Risk 3.2: Media Editing and Context Distortion

- **The Threat:** In a pre-recorded interview, the TV station edits a 10-minute conversation down to a 10-second soundbite, completely changing the meaning of the councillor's statement.
 - **Impact:** High (Severe reputational damage, public anger over a quote taken out of context).
 - **Control Measures:**
 - Request **live** interviews where possible or demand to know the exact context of the segment in writing before recording.
 - **The Dual-Record Rule:** The Clerk or an assistant must use a phone or voice recorder to record the *entire* interview from the room as an independent archive.
-

4. Safety & Digital Risks

Risk 4.1: Social Media Pile-On and Personal Harassment

- **The Threat:** The TV segment goes viral on local Facebook groups, X (Twitter), or TikTok, resulting in targeted trolling, threats, or harassment toward the councillor or Clerk.
- **Impact:** High (Mental health toll, physical safety concerns).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Pre-interview briefing on digital safety.
 - Turn off commenting on the Parish Council's official social channels if a segment airs.
 - Immediate reporting of any personal threats to the Police via 101.

Risk 4.2: "Hot Mic" and Off-Camera Blunders

- **The Threat:** A councillor makes an inappropriate comment or joke while the camera crew is packing up, unaware their lapel microphone is still active and recording.
- **Impact:** High (Irreparable reputational and career damage).
- **Control Measures:**
 - Strict training: **"Assume you are live from the moment the crew arrives at the property until they leave the street."**
 - Never engage in casual banter or "off-the-record" gossip with the TV crew.

Risk Scoring Summary (Post-Mitigation)

Risk Area	Likelihood Impact		Risk Score	Action Required
	(1-5)	(1-5)	(L x I)	
Defamation / Legal	1	5	5 (Low)	Pre-approved script strictly followed.
Code of Conduct	2	3	6 (Medium)	Clerk sign-off required prior to interview.
Staff/Clerk Burden	3	3	9 (Medium)	Implement 48-hour press pause if needed.
Media Editing Trap	4	3	12 (High)	Mandatory independent audio recording.
Hot Mic / Blunders	2	5	10 (High)	Total silence on non-council matters.

This **Pre-Interview Authorisation Form** serves as a mandatory checklist and legal sign-off. It must be completed by the designated councillor and approved by the Clerk (and/or Council Chair) **before** any television or broadcast interview takes place.

Once completed, this document should be filed in the Council's official minutes or administrative archive to protect both the individual and the corporate body.

Parish Council: Pre-Interview Media Authorization Form

Section 1: Interview & Media Outlet Details

- **Name of Representative:** _____
- **Role/Title (e.g., Chair, Councillor):** _____
- **Media Outlet / TV Station:** _____
- **Journalist/Producer Name:** _____
- **Contact Number & Email:** _____
- **Date & Time of Interview:** _____ **Duration:** _____
- **Location of Interview:** _____
- **Broadcast Format:**
 - ☐ Live Broadcast (High Risk)
 - ☐ Pre-Recorded Segment (Medium/High Risk)
 - ☐ Studio Appearance
 - ☐ On-Location / Field Interview

Section 2: Scope & Key Messages

- **1. What is the explicit, agreed topic of this interview?**
(Note: Stick only to this topic. Do not wander into unapproved council business.)
-
- **2. What are the approved Council Resolutions or Adopted Policies regarding this topic?**
(List the specific minute references, dates, or formal statements approved by the full council.)
-
- **3. List the 2 or 3 core facts/messages that must be delivered:**
 - Message 1:

- Message 2:

- Message 3:

Section 3: Mandatory Risk Check & Safeguards

The Councillor must initial each box to confirm understanding:

- [____] **The "No Name" Rule:** I agree that I will not name, blame, or target individual residents, developers, business owners, or members of council staff on camera.
- [____] **The Corporate Voice:** I understand I am representing the corporate body of the Parish Council. I will not state personal opinions, political alignments, or speculative "what-if" scenarios.
- [____] **The Hot Mic Rule:** I acknowledge that microphones and cameras are to be treated as active and recording from the moment the media crew arrives until they fully exit the area.
- [____] **The Dual-Record Rule:** I agree to have a second person (the Clerk or an assigned councillor) present to record the entire raw interview on a mobile device or audio recorder for council records.

Section 4: Declarations & Sign-Off

Councillor Declaration:

"I confirm that I have reviewed the Parish Council Media Communication Policy and the Media Engagement Risk Assessment. I agree to stick strictly to the pre-approved scope and corporate resolutions of the council as outlined above. I accept that any unauthorised deviations or personal comments that violate the Code of Conduct may result in an immediate referral to the District/Borough Monitoring Officer."

- **Signature of Councillor:** _____ **Date:** _____

Clerk / Proper Officer Authorisation:

"I confirm that this interview request has been reviewed against council risk protocols. The scope aligns with adopted council policies, and the representative has been fully briefed on key messaging and risk mitigation strategies."

- **Signature of Clerk:** _____ **Date:** _____
- **Signature of Chair (if applicable):** _____ **Date:** _____