

Draft Media Protocol

Event	Method	Audience	Person responsible	Notes
Reminder of standards committee including role and process for making complaints	Press release/and or Website	Local press	Comms Team	Twice a year
Issue of Standards Committee agenda	Published on website and front page of agenda sent to Local media	Local press/all members	Comms Team/Monitoring Officer	This may prompt further media enquiries
Press query - On receipt of a complaint	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	<i>If a query is raised by the press in which they name the Member complained about:</i> Confirm name of member; date complaint received; type of person complaining (e.g. member of public); relevant parts of the Code. This information will not be provided until 3 workings days after a member has been notified in writing of the complaint.
Press query – Following consideration of a complaint by the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee (initial sifting)	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	The Council will not publicise decisions in relation to Code of Conduct complaints at this stage. <i>If a query is raised by the press in which they name the Member complained about:</i> Confirm name of member; date complaint received; type of person complaining (e.g. member of public); relevant

				parts of the Code; date complaint considered; reason for non-referral (if applicable); if investigation will take place; if action other than investigation will take place and if so, what. . This information will not be provided until 3 working days after a member has been notified in writing of the decision.
Press query – during an investigation.	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	Confirm that an investigation is ongoing; give generic info about investigations; explain the possible outcomes of investigations. Explain that no further comments can be made until the investigative process is complete.
Press query – following an investigation and where there has been no breach, no further action is needed or the matter has been resolved in some other way (other action).	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	The Investigation report will not be published but matter should be reported to standards committee. If the matter has generated local interest the Council may consider putting out a brief statement explaining the outcome and reasoning. Requests for a copy of the Investigation Report would be dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
Press query – hearing and whether in the public domain	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	There is a presumption that a hearing following an

				investigation would normally be held in public unless there are lawful reasons for all or part of it to be heard as exempt or confidential matters.
Results of hearings of Committee	Press release following recommended template	Local press/all members/website news area	Comms/Monitoring Officer	<p><i>The final investigation report:</i> Whether a copy can be provided will depend on whether the report is confidential or considered to be in the public domain.</p> <p><i>The outcome of the hearing:</i> If the Member is found in breach but no action is needed, the Council will issue a public summary which will say that the councillor has failed to follow the Code but that no action needs to be taken, outline what happened and give reasons for the panel's decision not to take any action.</p> <p>If the Member is found to be in breach and a sanction is imposed, a public summary will be issued to say that the Member failed to follow the Code, outlining what happened; explaining what sanction has been imposed and giving reasons for the decision made by the panel.</p>

				If the Member is found not to have breached the Code ; a public notice will only be issued if the Member has no objection.
Press query regarding number of complaints made about a Councillor	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	The number of complaints can be confirmed. In the event of a large number of names needing to be checked, a Freedom of Information request may be required.
Press query regarding name of complainant	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	The names of complainants will not be disclosed as this might deter complainants from bringing legitimate concerns to the Council's attention. In addition, by revealing the names of complainants we run the risk of compromising our duty to protect whistleblowers.
Press query regarding cost of complaint and or investigation	Verbal or written	Query only	Comms/Monitoring Officer	The Council does not keep a record of time spent on individual complaints. For specific investigations, a Freedom of Information request will be required.