



POLICY NO	CP/GOV – 3102	
POLICY	Media & Corporate Communications	
RESPONSIBLE DIRECTORATE	Governance	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Chief Executive Officer	
COUNCIL ADOPTION	Date: 28/07/15	Resolution No: 11044
REVIEWED/MODIFIED	Date:	Resolution No:
	Date:	Resolution No:
REVIEW DUE	Date: July 2017	
LEGISLATION	Local Government Act 1995	
RELATED POLICIES	CP/CS-3281 Customer Service	
RELATED PROCEDURES	Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Employees Staff Induction Handbook	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish Council's commitment to effectively respond to the media and to provide quality corporate communication to the wider community and stakeholders.

DEFINITION:

Media is any broadcaster of communications, including digital (online), social, radio, print, television or newsletter distributor.

Social Media is any form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (e.g videos).

Corporate communication is a set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating a favourable point of view among stakeholders on which the organisation depends.

A **spokesperson** is someone engaged or elected to speak on behalf of others.

Media relations involves working with media for the purpose of informing the public of an organisation's mission, policies and practices in a positive, consistent and credible manner.

POLICY STATEMENTS:

PURPOSE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

- Provide regular and consistent communication on Council's projects and activities to all stakeholders
- Create a positive and professional image for the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley through open communication and increased awareness of Council's activities and projects
- A tool for community engagement
- Effectively manage issues

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

- Positive reputation building
- Strong relationships with community and key stakeholders
- Ability to receive two-way communication from the community and key stakeholders to strengthen the Shire's services
- Enables Council to deal with crises from a position of strength
- Improves employee morale and job satisfaction
- Helps attract and retain quality employees

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AUDIENCE

The Shire's corporate communications audience includes:

- Local, regional and national media
- Shire ratepayers and residents
- Potential residents to the Shire
- Visitors to the Shire
- Investors, developers and individuals with business interests in the Shire
- Community and government organisations
- Shire Councillors
- Shire employees

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

The Shire's corporate communications tools include:

- **Media releases:** For communicating issues or items of high importance that are newsworthy. Shire President and/or CEO approval required before distribution.
- **SWEK News (a fortnightly column in the Kimberley Echo):** For providing information and positive news stories to the community. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **www.swek.wa.gov.au:** For providing the latest up to date information. Supervisor approval required before distribution.
- **Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley Facebook page:** For engaging in two way communication. Only employees approved by the CEO are to use social media on behalf of the Shire.
- **Public notices:** Notices of information that are often required by legislation. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **Print advertisements:** Notices of information that are often required by legislation. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **Television or radio interviews:** For providing comment on request from the media. Shire President approval required.
- **Staff meetings:** For providing information to Shire employees. Director approval required before distribution.
- **Councillor Communique:** For providing information to Shire Councillors. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **Community emails:** For providing information to community groups via a group email list. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **Direct mail/mail drops:** For informing the community. CEO approval required before distribution.
- **Information booths at fairs or events:** For informing the community. CEO approval required.
- **Surveys/comment forms:** For obtaining feedback. CEO approval required.

- **Community workshops, meetings, advisory groups or committees or focus groups:** For consulting with, working directly with, collaborating with the community and/or stakeholders. CEO approval required.

MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

The Shire President is the Shire's official spokesperson:

Local Government Act 1995

2.8. Role of mayor or president

(1) *The mayor or president —*

- (c) *carries out civic and ceremonial duties on behalf of the local government;*
and
- (d) *speaks on behalf of the local government*

The spokesperson is the only person to make public comment on behalf of the Shire. Public comment includes:

- Speaking at public events
- Speaking on radio or television
- Expressing views to newspapers or in books, journals and notices where it might be expected that the publication or circulation of the comment will spread to the community at large

The CEO can be a spokesperson if the Shire President agrees.

Local Government Act 1995

5.41. Functions of CEO

The CEO's functions are to —

- (f) *speak on behalf of the local government if the mayor or president agrees;*
and

The Shire President may ask other Councillors to speak to the media for a specific purpose. If the Shire President agrees, the CEO may ask other Shire employees to speak to the media for a specific purpose.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Shire will endeavour to establish and maintain a good working relationship with local and regional media outlets.

The Shire will provide accurate and timely information to media outlets that promotes the Shire in a positive way.

All media relations including the distribution of media releases, organisation of photo opportunities, contacting the media with the intent of gaining publicity, response to media inquiries for information, is to be at the approval of the Shire President and/or CEO.

PERSONALITY & TONE

The Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley's personality and tone when communicating is to be:

- In the third person
- Positive (even when answering negative issues)

- Straightforward and uncomplicated
- Respectful

Communications must not be threatening, abusive, defamatory, indecent, menacing, harassing, offensive, infringe on any persons intellectual property rights, including copyright, impersonate anyone, misrepresent a relationship with any person or organisation, disclose information that is commercially sensitive or personal information, encourage others to commit unlawful acts or be unlawful in any way.

Communications must reflect the status and objectives of the Shire.

CRISES COMMUNICATIONS

Occasionally an unforeseen crisis occurs; good practice crisis communications includes:

- Identify a single spokesperson and ensure that they are available at all times throughout the crisis to talk to the media and are well briefed on the issue.
- Be prepared and factual to any inquiries. Have all facts and figures on hand and constantly updated. If the Shire is unable to respond to an inquiry, provide a time frame for a response.
- Responses to inquiries should always consider the community first, take responsibility, be honest, show genuine sympathy (if applicable) and state the who, when, what, where and why of the situation. Outline the steps that have been taken to rectify the situation and if required deliver a full inquiry into the situation.
- Provide a constant flow of information to key stakeholders.
- Be accessible and familiar with media needs and deadlines.
- Monitor media coverage and correspondence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES:

This policy provides Council Members, Committee Members and employees in the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley with guidelines to ensure media and corporate communications about the Shire are consistent, factual and that a positive image of the Shire is created.

This policy applies to all official media and corporate communication provided on behalf of the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley.

This policy does not cover the use of social media by Shire employees or Council Members in a personal capacity.

This policy does not cover Customer Service such as email and phone etiquette.

RISK:

Risk: Wrong advice provided, leading to political damage or financial loss

Control: Seek specialist technical and legislative/legal advice from relevant agencies and organisations.

Risk: Inappropriate use of social media by Shire staff and Councillors.

Control: Relevant policy and Code of Conduct included in staff induction.

Risk: Poor communication of Council issues to the community

Control: Media and Communications policy and procedures, media training for Councillors

Risk: Failure to comply with legislative requirements leading to damage of reputation and/or financial loss.

Control: Review policies and procedures in accordance with review schedule.