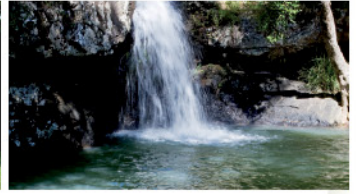


Media Engagement Protocol - COUNCILLORS



Councillor Media App A Protocol

1.0 Overview

Media engagement is an important tool or method for the effective promotion and communication of council's activities, policies and programs.

Council is proactive in managing its relationship with the media to ensure residents of the Sunshine Coast are accurately and fairly informed about council programs, projects, decisions, initiatives and events.

Corporate media advice and services are provided to council at operational, divisional and strategic levels.

This protocol aligns with the adopted Councillor Code of Conduct and the Councillor Portfolio System and Protocols.

2.0 Objectives

1. To manage council's reputation in the community by speaking with 'one voice' (using clear, agreed, consistent key messages).
2. To promote a positive relationship between council and the media by defining responsibilities when engaging with the media and providing easy to follow steps that encourage proactivity, create clarity, support openness and approachability.
3. To ensure that the Key Ethical and Behavioural Obligations outlined in the adopted Councillor Code of Conduct in relation to communication are met, namely:
 - communicate with the public or media on behalf of the Council, in accordance with Council's "Media Engagement Protocol"
 - when communicating with the public or the media, make it clear when expressing a personal opinion, and when speaking on behalf of Council
 - when communicating with the public or the media to express a personal opinion about a Council resolution, respect the democratic process by first acknowledging that Council resolutions represent the majority view of Council.

3.0 Context

This document outlines practical arrangements for the Mayor and Councillors to utilise when engaging with the media (and when using social media).

It details processes through which council and media agencies can collaborate effectively and efficiently.

It should be read in conjunction with the adopted Councillor Code of Conduct and the Councillor Portfolio System and Protocols.

4.0 Outcomes

- Public comment on behalf of council and relating to council decisions is made by approved/agreed council spokespeople
- Co-ordinated approach to working with the media
- Provision of clear advice to assist the Mayor and Councillors who come into contact with the media
- Protection and promotion of council's brand and reputation

Councillor Media App A Protocol

5.0 Corporate Media Advice and Service Provision

Council's corporate media and advice services are provided through the:

- Media and Public Relations Unit (Customer Relations Branch) – with primary responsibility for provision of divisional councillor media and public relations support, departmental media and public relations support including operational aspects of portfolio requirements, general media enquiries and communication tools such as social media.
- Strategic Marketing and Communication team (Executive Office) – with primary responsibility for strategic aspects of portfolio requirements, media advice and support for the Mayor and strategic campaigns or marketing initiatives.

These two operational areas regularly update and share information across their respective areas, to ensure full service provision, consistency in messaging, clarity on assigned responsibilities and best use of available resources.

Councillors are able to confirm assigned media support for specific issues and projects by contacting the Manager Customer Relations or the Manager Executive Office.

Portfolio-related service provision (both strategic and operational) is assigned between the teams on the basis of the Councillor Portfolio System and Protocol (see appendix) and portfolio overviews (title, description, scope, operational and strategic projects, performance indicators, key messages), as developed and agreed by Portfolio Councillors and Executive Directors.

Media training is available to all elected representatives. A program may be arranged for interested councillors on request. The training is provided over one day and limited to between six and eight participants. The training provides techniques for responding to media requests and has a strong focus on issues management.

5.1 Service Principles

Council's Media and Public Relations Unit and Strategic Marketing and Communication Team work to ensure that:

- Media commitments, responsibilities, information provision and special requests are managed efficiently, effectively and in a timely fashion;
- Councillors are informed of media requests and responses, as required;
- Media support is provided to Councillors in both their Divisional and their Portfolio roles in accordance with agreed protocols and working arrangements;
- Wherever possible, agreed communication plans are provided to outline a clear direction actions, objectives, timelines and spokesperson.

To help manage media requests and address issues, Councillors will collaborate with the relevant team (Media and Public Relations Unit and Strategic Marketing and Communication Team) to:

- identify routine/potential media issues in a timely manner to help ensure they are managed
- provide information in a timely manner to initiate proactive, planned media campaigns that align with agreed corporate messaging and priorities

Councillor Media App A Protocol

6.0 Approved media spokespeople:

All media campaigns, enquiries and media releases or statements require the identification of a spokesperson.

The spokesperson will be identified according to the following criteria and in line with the adopted Portfolio System and Protocol (see appendix):

1. *Regional issues* – Mayor.* If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor will be the spokesperson. The Deputy Mayor, if unavailable, will refer the spokesperson opportunity to the relevant Portfolio, Divisional Councillor or CEO (or his delegate).
2. *Regional issues – Portfolio.* The Portfolio Councillor will be the principal council spokesperson on regional issues falling under the ambit of the Portfolio, noting the mayor's prerogative to take precedence at his discretion and in consultation with the Portfolio Councillor. In fulfilling the spokesperson role, the Portfolio Councillor shall be cognisant of the roles, obligations and responsibilities of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, other portfolios that may share the spokesperson role due to the nature of the project, and the Divisional Councillor.
3. *Portfolio issues with significant Divisional interest.* The Divisional Councillor will take the lead spokesperson role. This includes programs and projects that may sit under a Portfolio but which are relevant only to an individual Division or Divisional Councillor. The Portfolio Councillor will assist and work with the Divisional Councillor in this instance. This may be by providing statements in relation to how the project/program/issue fits within the overarching policy or strategy.
4. *Divisional issues – relevant Divisional Councillor.* If the Divisional Councillor declines, the spokesperson opportunity will be referred to the CEO (or his delegate)
5. *Organisational issues* – the CEO or appropriate Executive Director (or delegate).
6. *Factual information* (not opinion or commentary) – the CEO, appropriate Executive Director or their delegate as detailed in relevant, approved Departmental Media Protocols.

Note* : Regional issues include:

- matters of emergency eg. floods, fires, cyclones
- major reputation management
- State and/or Federal Government matters and relationships
- opening of major facilities
- initiatives and projects of major regional significance
- region wide planning matters
- major regional events
- major regional promotions
- national and international charity appeals
- general social commentary or industry-related matters

Councillor Media App A Protocol

6.1 Delegated authority:

To assist in meeting news deadlines, delegation of responsibility for regional issues is as follows:

1. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor will become the spokesperson
2. If the Deputy Mayor is unavailable, the appropriate Portfolio or Divisional Councillor will become the spokesperson
3. If the appropriate Portfolio or Divisional Councillor is unavailable, the CEO or his delegate will become the spokesperson.

6.2 Media enquiries:

1. The Mayor, the CEO (or his delegate) will keep Councillors informed about controversial media issues and what is being done to deal with them. Councillors will provide advice to the same group in similar circumstances.
2. The Media and Public Relations Unit will coordinate media interviews for Councillors and attend if required, as per the Councillor Service Level Agreement.
3. The Strategic Marketing and Communication Team will coordinate media interviews for strategic portfolio-related matters and attend if required.
4. If any spokesperson is in any doubt of council's position or direction on a particular media issue or enquiry they may wish to seek clarification from the Mayor, the appropriate Portfolio or Divisional Councillor, the CEO or his delegate, as required and appropriate.

7.0 Media monitoring

Council, through a media monitoring company, clips all newspaper articles and provides summaries of print broadcast news, which mention Sunshine Coast Council.

These clips and summaries are placed onto the intranet every morning (Monday to Friday) and can be accessed by all staff.

You can access the clips via the A-Z of services listing – under M.

8.0 Resolving concerns

If you are unhappy about the way a media issue has been managed, contact the Media and Public Relations Co-ordinator or the Marketing and Communication Strategist, for portfolio related matters, in the first instance.

If satisfaction is not reached, the issue will be escalated to Manager, Customer Relations or Manager Executive Office for portfolio-related matters.

If concern remains, the matter will be escalated to the Community Services Executive Director

If dissatisfaction remains, the matter is to be dealt with by the Chief Executive Officer.

Councillor Media App A Protocol

9.0 Further references

- Councillor Code of Conduct
 - Councillors Portfolio System and Protocol
 - Divisional Councillor Service Level (Media and Public Relations)
 - Employee Media Engagement Protocol
 - Employee Code of Conduct
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Councillor Media App A Protocol

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Sunshine Coast
Council

www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

T 07 5475 7272 F 07 5475 7277

Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre Qld 4560