

POLICY CC4 - COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Approved By: Council

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1. Purpose

This Policy sets out legislative obligations and governance protocols that apply to the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes' official communications with the community.

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that the Shire is professionally, accurately and consistently represented, and that public communications support transparency, accountability and a positive public perception of the Shire.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All official communications initiated or responded to by the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes with the community; and
- Council Members when making public comment, whether in their role as a Council Member or in a personal capacity, on matters relevant to the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Official Communication	Any communication made by the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, its Council Members, or Officers in their official capacity on behalf of the Shire, including media statements, newsletters, website posts, social media posts, and public notices.
Personal Communication	Any communication made by a Council Member or Officer in a private capacity that is not authorised as an official Shire communication.
Council Member	An elected member of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, including the Shire President and Deputy Shire President.
Officer	A Shire employee appointed to provide administrative, professional, or governance support in the delivery of the Shire's functions.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, responsible for the overall administration of the Shire and authorised communications.
Spokesperson	The Shire President, Deputy Shire President, or CEO (where authorised), acting in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> to represent the Shire in official communications.

Term	Definition
Social Media	Digital platforms used for communication and engagement with the community, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter/X, and any official apps or blogs maintained or authorised by the Shire.
Community	Residents, ratepayers, businesses, stakeholders, and other individuals or organisations interacting with the Shire.
Media	Journalists, reporters, editors, and media organisations that request information or comment on Shire matters.
Confidential Information	Information that is restricted from public disclosure under legislation, Council decision, or authorised policy, including personal or commercially sensitive data.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Official Communications

The Shire's official communications aim to:

- Share information required by law or of interest to the community.
- Promote Shire events, services, public notices, and consultation opportunities.
- Receive and respond to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments, and complaints.

Official communications must be professional, respectful, and consistent with relevant legislation, Council positions, and policies. Modes of communication include:

- Website
- Promotional materials and advertisements
- Media releases prepared for the Shire President
- Social media channels
- Newsletters, letter drops, and other discretionary communications

4.2 Speaking on Behalf of the Shire

- The Shire President is the official spokesperson under s.2.8(1)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- The Deputy Shire President may act in the President's absence (s.2.9, s.5.34).
- The CEO may speak on the Shire's behalf if authorised by the Shire President (s.5.41(f)).

Council Members and Officers must not:

- Bring the Shire into disrepute (Rules of Conduct Reg.3(d)).
- Imply Shire endorsement of personal views (s.2.8(1)(d)).
- Disclose confidential information without authorisation (s.5.93).
- Use social media or unsecured forums to transact official business (*State Records Act 2000*, s.5.23(2), s.5.93).

4.3 Responding to Media Enquiries

- All media enquiries received by either an elected member or an employee, seeking an official Shire response must be directed to the CEO or authorised officer to ensure coordinated communication. Council Members may comment to the media in a personal capacity (see clause 7).

- The Manager Executive Services Unit is responsible for coordinating media liaison, issuing media releases and responding to media enquires on behalf of the Shire. Unless specifically approved by the CEO, employees are not authorised to make comment to the media on Shire matters.

4.4 Social Media

- Social media will be used for community engagement and interactive information sharing, not for complex or private matters.
- Content will be moderated to remove offensive, unlawful, misleading, or inappropriate material.
- Official Shire social media accounts must not be used for personal communications.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Council	Endorse the Policy; approve official positions or statements requiring Council input.
Shire President	Act as official spokesperson; ensure communications reflect Council positions; authorise CEO or others.
Deputy Shire President	Act as spokesperson in the President's absence; support communications.
CEO	Oversee administration of communications; coordinate media responses; authorise Officers; ensure legislative compliance.
Council Members	Make personal communications in accordance with this Policy and Code of Conduct; avoid misrepresentation; seek CEO advice when needed.
Officers	Draft content, provide advice, and maintain records; do not act as spokesperson unless authorised.
Community / Stakeholders	Engage respectfully; provide constructive feedback through official channels.

6. Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

All official communications, including social media content, must be retained as Shire records in accordance with the Record Keeping Plan and *State Records Act 2000*. Records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*. Council Members must transfer relevant records to Shire administration.

7. Personal Communications

7.1 Personal communication and statement made privately; in conversation, written, recorded, emailed, texted or posted in personal social media have the potential to be made public, whether intentional or not. Elected Members should therefore ensure that their personal or private communications do not break the requirements of this Policy, the Councillor Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.

7.2 Council Member Statements

Council Members may make personal statements on Shire matters provided they:

- Clearly state the comment is personal and does not represent the Shire.

- Are lawful, accurate, respectful, and factually correct.
- Do not damage the Shire's or individuals' reputations.
- Avoid contradicting Council decisions or reflecting adversely on others.

Media assistance may be requested from the CEO. Breaches may constitute a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* (s.5.105).

8. Legislative and Other References

- *Local Government Act 1995*
- *State Records Act 2000*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1992*
- *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*
- Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes Code of Conduct

9. Review and Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if:

- Legislative changes occur.
- Governance or operational requirements change.

Monitoring of compliance is the responsibility of the CEO.

10. Related Documents / Forms

- Member Code of Conduct
- Social Media Guidelines (Shire Administration)
- Media and Communications Procedures