

	COUNCIL POLICY	
	Council Media Council Policy	
	Policy Number	CP038
	Directorate	Organisational Services
	Owner	Marketing and Communications
	Last Approved	27/09/2023
	Review Due	27/09/2026

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure there is a consistent and coordinated approach to interacting with the media, and to set out how media, marketing and promotional activities are managed and approved at Council.

2. SCOPE

The scope of this policy applies to Council officials where they:

- Communicate with the media about Council decisions and projects in line with the priorities set out in the Budget and Corporate Plan;
- Attend public speaking engagements; or
- Make comments on Council affairs where it is reasonably foreseeable that their comments will be publicised in the media.

It specifies who is authorised to act as a spokesperson and the processes to follow prior to the release of corporate information.

This policy acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of Councillors as elected representatives as outlined in the Local Government Act and its supporting Regulation.

3. HEAD OF POWER

Local Government Act 2009

4. DEFINITIONS

To assist in the interpretation of this Policy the following definitions apply:

“Council officials” means the Mayor, Councillors, employees, delegates of Council and volunteers.

“Council officers” means employees of Council.

“Elected members” means the Mayor and Councillors.

“Volunteers” means registered volunteers of Council involved with the operation of Council events and programs.

“Media” means television, radio and print media, including specialist and trade publications and internet and social media news services, their journalists, photographers and camera operators.

“Media activities” means the transmission of information from Council to external audiences via the media through media releases and media announcements about Council decisions and projects, subject to available resources and Council priorities.

“Marketing and promotion activities” means activities and strategies designed to inform, persuade and influence through a range of communications channels including but not limited to Council’s website, social media platforms, advertising, digital screens, direct mail and email, subject to available resources and Council priorities.

“Public comment” means interviews with the media (including comments to or interviews with print or online media, radio or television), public speaking engagements and expressing views in letters to the editors, in books, notices, articles or in any medium where it is reasonably foreseeable that the publication or circulation will enter the public domain.

“Publication” means the distribution of information via print and electronic media including but not limited to newspapers, radio and television broadcasting, social media, and the internet.

“Corporate information” means knowledge communicated or received concerning Council business, however acquired.

“Discrete Division” means relating solely to and confined solely to a specific Council division, which is a defined geographical area within the Fraser Coast Local Government area. It does not relate to matters within a Division that are of regional significance.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The Media Policy has been established to:

- Formalise the roles of Council Officials;
- Ensure consistency in dealing with the media;
- Ensure all communication with the media is well informed, timely and accurate; and
- Promote open exchange of information between Council and the media.

Developing strong and co-operative relationships with the media is important and provides an opportunity to:

- Keep the community informed about Council activities, services and programs;
- Involve the community in dialogue about the provision of services and planning for the future; and
- Involve the community in activities that support the region’s lifestyle.

5.1. Media Activities

The Corporate Communications team will manage proactive and reactive media activities and requests to ensure a positive image and reputation is built through Council’s external communications.

The Corporate Communications team is responsible for developing and facilitating newsworthy media activities to reflect the priorities set out in the Budget and Corporate Plan, and in anticipation of significant Council decisions and projects.

Proactive media activities will be organised to ensure the participation of an official Council spokesperson, where possible and appropriate. Divisional Councillors will be extended an invitation to attend media events held within their respective divisions.

Councillors and Council employees are encouraged to contact Corporate Communication with items they believe merit media coverage and are consistent with Council's priorities. The Corporate Communications team will make the ultimate determination on proactive media activities based on newsworthiness, relevance to Council's priorities and availability of resources.

5.2. Official Spokesperson

5.2.1. Mayor

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council media activities, but may delegate responsibility to other Councillors as per the decision flow in this policy.

5.2.2. Elected members

The elected member who has advocated for a particular project or decision will be the main media spokesperson for that specific project or decision. If elected members have conflicting views over who advocated a particular initiative, the Mayor will determine who will be the spokesperson.

For Council decisions or projects where there has not been an elected member advocate and which relate to multiple Divisions, the Corporate Communications team will determine the spokesperson based on a table developed and updated every 12 months in consultation with Councillors.

The Divisional Councillor will be the spokesperson on local divisional issues.

Elected members who have voted against a majority decision of Council will not be asked to be the spokesperson for that decision unless there are no other options.

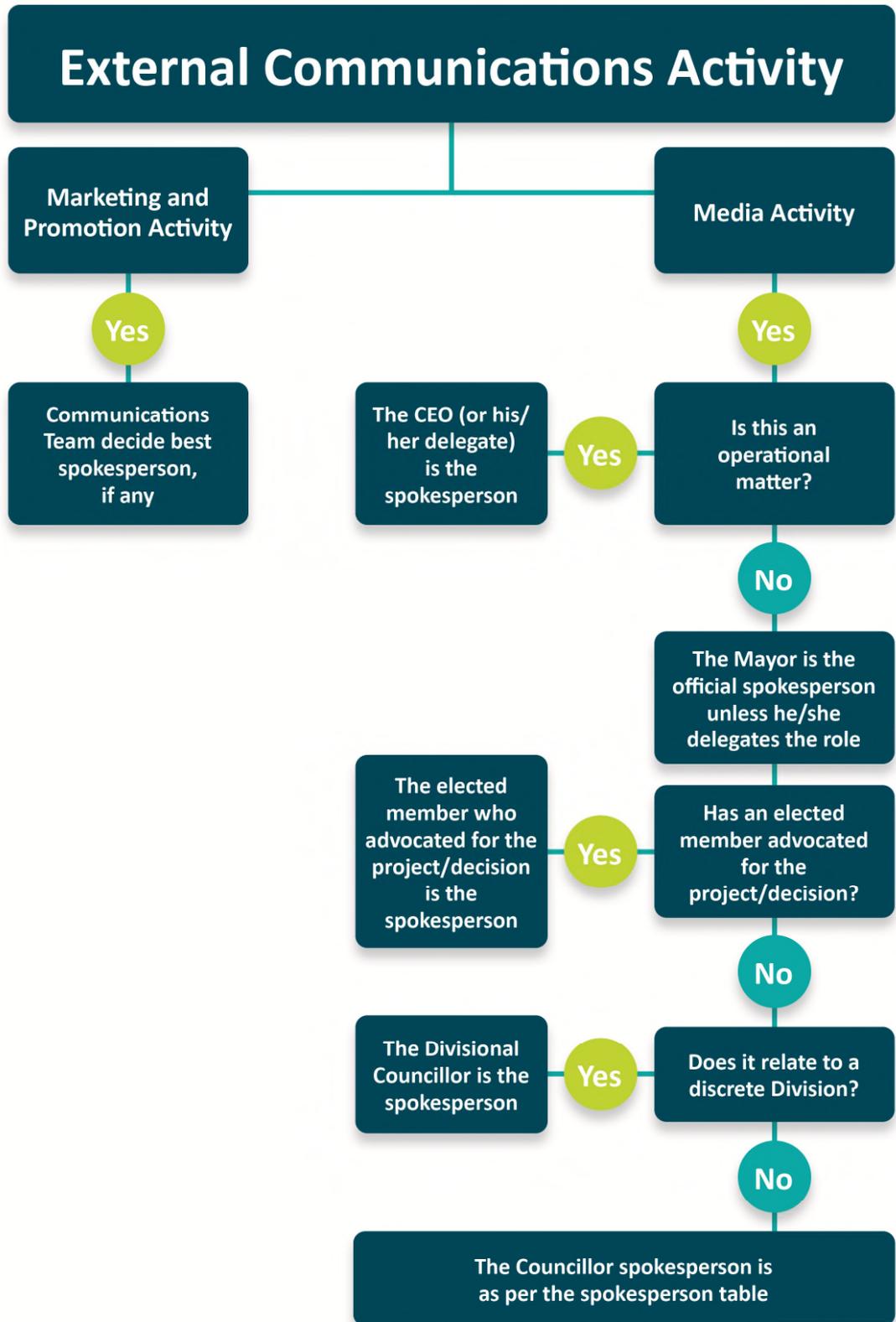
5.2.3. Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is the primary spokesperson for Council operational matters but may delegate responsibility to other Council employees.

5.2.4. Council employees

Council employees, including Directors, are not official Council spokespeople unless otherwise requested to comment by the CEO and/or the Corporate Communications team. If approved, any comments should be limited to factual information – not opinion or supposition.

5.2.5 Decision flow



5.3. Marketing and Promotion Activities

The Corporate Communications team is solely responsible for developing marketing and promotion activities, such as campaigns and strategies, to reflect the priorities set out in the Budget and Corporate Plan and in anticipation of significant Council decisions and events.

The Corporate Communications team will determine which, if any, elected members or Council officers are involved in marketing and promotion activities.

Elected members do not determine the use of Council resources for media, marketing, and promotional activities.

Elected members are not permitted to use media and marketing material created by the Corporate Communications team until after it has been used on an official Council communications channel.

Elected members are permitted to do their own marketing and promotion about Council decisions, events and services on their own channels using their own resources.

5.4. Obligations

5.4.1. Disclosure of private information

Council officials are to be aware of the Information Privacy Act and other relevant Council Policies when considering the disclosure of information that could be considered personal or sensitive information. Personal information as defined by the Information Privacy Act must not be disclosed.

Council officials must only disclose publicly available information and information that is not confidential.

5.4.2. Accuracy

Council officials must be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. If an error is identified in any media comment, it should be corrected and if necessary, the CEO will issue or will authorise a media release to clarify the incorrect information.

Council officials must not publish any information they know or reasonably believe to be false or misleading.

5.4.3. Elected members' opinion

As members of the community, elected members are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment on Council affairs. Elected members must use their best endeavours to ensure that when expressing a personal opinion on a matter that it is clearly stated, or it is clear in the context presented, that the public comment is their own and not that of Council.

Elected members are responsible for the content they publish in a personal capacity on any form of social media. Elected members should follow the advice outlined in the social media guide for elected Council members in Queensland prepared by the Office of the Independent Assessor and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

5.4.4.Negative comment

Council officials should support Council decisions and should refrain from using the media to make negative personal reflections on each other, or comments that could be interpreted as such, and/or which are reasonably likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.

5.4.5.Public interest

Council will openly discuss matters of public interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligation of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern its operations.

5.4.6.Discrimination and defamation

Council officials must be aware of anti-discrimination and defamation laws and not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory or defaming of an individual, group or organisation.

5.4.7. Off the record statements

Council employees will not give off-the-record comments regardless of the situation.

5.5. Caretaker period

Comments from elected members and use of photos in any Council publications or communications channels will be prohibited during the election "Caretaker Period", as defined in the Local Government Act, to avoid publications falling within the definition of "election matter" under the Act.

6. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Council Code of Conduct 2010 Management Policy (eDOCS #1969232)

Council Advertising Policy (eDOCS #1885685)

7. REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed when related legislation/documents are amended or replaced, other circumstances as determined from time to time by Council or at intervals of no more than three years.

Version Control

Version Number	Key Changes	Approval Authority	Approval Date	Document Number
11	Amended Policy	Council	27/09/2023	1958812
12				