External Communication Policy

DETAILS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Effective from:</th>
<th>11 August 2016</th>
<th>Contact officer:</th>
<th>Manager Corporate Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Next review date:</td>
<td>August 2018</td>
<td>File reference:</td>
<td>LG324/212/05/01</td>
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<tr>
<th>iSpot #</th>
<th>This policy 23598733</th>
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<td>Value Proposition</td>
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OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

Objectives

- Positive image and reputation of Council of the City of Gold Coast (Council)
- Satisfactory level of awareness of Council’s strategies, policies, services and decisions.
- Community has access to objective and balanced information about Council’s decisions, activities and services

Performance measures

- Average favourability of Council print and social media coverage
- Degree of community awareness and understanding as measured from time to time

Risk assessment

- High

POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporate Communication branch, in consultation with the Office of the Mayor and the Office of the Chief Executive Officer, is responsible for developing, authorising and distributing external communications on behalf of Council and the City.

Corporate Communication must be consulted at the inception of all projects requiring media contact, social media interaction, public relations, marketing, graphic design, community consultation, photography, video production and external websites.

All external communications must comply with the provisions of the attached guidelines. The policy and guidelines:

- provide direction for Councillors and City officers, including contractors, on contact with the media and issuing of public statements including on social media
- clearly identify the official City spokesperson under normal and extraordinary conditions (e.g. disaster or emergency situations)
- provide direction for City officers who are approached to speak in public
- provide direction for Councillors in the preparation of material for Council-funded publications (such as Divisional newsletters)
- provide direction to City officers who may be approached to provide publicity for suppliers

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors and City officers.
DEFINITIONS

Caretaker period - section 90A of the Local Government Act 2009 provides that the caretaker period starts on the day when public notice of the holding of the election is announced by the Electoral Commission of Queensland and ends on the day on which the last declaration of the poll is displayed by the Returning Officer.

RELATED POLICIES AND DELEGATIONS

Code of Conduct for Employees
Information Management and Information Privacy Policy
Right to Information and Information Provision Policy
ICT Security – Information Security Classification Standards
Procurement Policy and Contract Manual
Advertising Spending Policy
Social Media Policy
Enterprise Risk Management Policy
Disaster Management Policy
Brand Guide
Communication Guide Policy
Community Consultation Policy

LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 2009
Local Government Regulation 2012

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Operational Guidelines for External Communications (within policy)

RESPONSIBILITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Chief Operating Officer</th>
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<td>Owner</td>
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VERSION CONTROL

<table>
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<th>Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>23598733 v6</td>
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<td>GA15.1126.010/G15.1201.019</td>
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Printed copies are uncontrolled. It is the responsibility of each user to ensure that any copies of policy documents are the current issue.
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

This policy ensures Council presents clear and factual messages without unnecessary confusion caused by individual perceptions and interpretations. All external communications must be prepared and issued in accordance with these guidelines.

SCOPE

This policy provides direction for Councillors and City officers when dealing with the media, interacting on social media and making external communications. They specify who is authorised to act as a Council spokesperson and the procedures to be followed prior to the release of corporate information.

This does not preclude Councillors from making their own statements which may conflict with Council’s position. However, City officers and Council’s corporate resources are to be utilised only for issues which convey information on Council’s official stance, position, decisions and policy.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Communication and publicity stems from five principal sources, as a result of:

- opportunities generated by Corporate Communication
- requests from the Office of the Mayor
- decisions reached at Council meetings
- requests from a wide range of media outlets
- interactions on social media

OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON

Only the official spokesperson is authorised to make statements on Council’s behalf.

**Mayor**

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council on all issues.

Given the Mayor is elected by the whole of the City, the Mayor is often requested to comment in addition to, or instead of, the relevant spokesperson (as listed below).

**Deputy/Acting Mayor**

In the absence of the Mayor or at the request of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor may be the official spokesperson. This also applies to any Councillor who may be appointed Acting Mayor in the absence of both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In the event the Mayor is absent from the City, the Mayor may still elect to be the official spokesperson on a particular matter. The Acting Mayor would be advised at the time.

**Committee Chairs**

The Mayor (or Acting Mayor) may designate a Committee Chair as the official spokesperson for issues relating to and generated from their specific committee.

During the Chair’s absence, the Deputy Chairperson may act as spokesperson on the relevant area of Committee responsibility. Given media is unlikely to attend committee, Corporate Communication will focus on preparing Key Messages/media statement to be issued (if required) post Full Council.
If a committee item is likely to attract media interest, Key Messages and a potential media statement will be prepared for the Committee Chair. If the Mayor intends to publicly speak on a Committee issue he/she will, where practical, advise the relevant committee chair before undertaking the interview. This is not always possible as media often ask questions without notice on a range of topics and may result in Key Messages or Speaking Points having to be made available immediately after an interview has occurred.

**Divisional Councillors**

The Divisional Councillor is also the spokesperson on local divisional issues.

Divisional Councillors will be provided any information given to the media in relation to issues, or events, within their respective divisions. Where a significant project is occurring within a division, Corporate Communication will provide any Key Messages or proposed media statement to the Councillor, as well as the Mayor. Examples may be major road upgrades, new community infrastructure or key events.

Divisional Councillors may make personal statements on any issue. Councillors must clearly articulate that personal comments incongruent with Council’s position are theirs alone.

Corporate resources are not available to generate media on grassroots divisional events, however, advice will be provided to the Councillor on the best approach to generating media interest via platforms such as social media.

The Branch will provide social media training for Councillors as requested.

**Caretaker Period**

Media releases during the caretaker period must be of public interest, relate to day-to-day Council business, and must not be able to reasonably construed as being for political purposes.

Media events may be held during the caretaker period provided they relate to core Council business or an ongoing project and are not used for political purposes.

If, at a media event, the Mayor and / or a Committee Chair are asked a political question, the Mayor and / or Committee Chair may respond in their capacity as a candidate.

**Chief Executive Officer**

The Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the official Council spokesperson, may issue statements on corporate issues (such as staff/administrative matters).

**City officers**

City officers, including Directors, are not official Council spokespeople unless otherwise requested to comment by the Office of the Mayor, Office of the Chief Executive Officer and/or Corporate Communication. If approved, any comments are to be limited to factual information – not opinion or supposition.

In times of disaster or other emergency, the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and/or Corporate Communication Branch may nominate a City officer to provide updates to the media and through Council’s own channels.
Clarifications
Where there is any doubt as to the official spokesperson, or the information to be released, the matter shall be referred to Office of the Chief Executive Officer.

The Office of the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, is the ultimate arbiter in relation to the handling of media issues.

ATRIBUTION
A “Council spokesperson” should be attributed in external communications where there is no other official spokesperson quoted.

Office of the Mayor
The Mayor may nominate an advisor from his/her office, or direct Corporate Communication, to issue statements on his/her behalf. With the approval of the Office of the Mayor, these comments may be attributable to the Mayor or a “mayoral spokesperson”.

Office of the Chief Executive Officer
The Manager Corporate Communication may issue statements on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer, and as an official spokesperson of the Chief Executive Officer at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.

APPROVAL PROCESS
External communications must be approved by Manager, Corporate Communication; the official Council spokesperson; and, for matters pertaining to corporate administration, the Office of the Chief Executive Officer.

REPORTS TO COUNCIL
Directors should liaise with Corporate Communication to determine the likely media interest in reports to Council and its committees. Where appropriate, Corporate Communication will prepare Key Messages for the Chairperson (and other Councillors, including the Mayor).

CONFIDENTIALITY
Resolutions adopted by Council are public information and available to the media.

Notice that information/agenda items listed as confidential under the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012 are to be discussed, is public information, but the actual information/agenda item must not be communicated under any circumstances.

Council’s information management policies apply to all external communications by Councillors and City officers.

MEETING PROPRIETY
Taking pictures, videoing, or recording audio on the floor of Council Chambers during a meeting is not permitted unless approved by Corporate Communication, the Office of the

Mayor and/or Office of the Chief Executive Officer. Audio can be recorded from the media room however, television footage must not include audio.

CONTACT INFORMATION
External communications promoting Council initiatives must feature official customer contact phone numbers, website addresses and email addresses.
MEDIA

It is the responsibility of Corporate Communication to respond to media inquiries about Council decisions and initiatives.

The Office of the Mayor, responsible Director, and, where relevant, the appropriate divisional Councillor will be made aware of media inquiries.

The Office of the Chief Executive Officer and Directors should make every effort to assist, in a timely manner and mindful of deadlines, Corporate Communication in the preparation of responses including through research and technical advice.

Media responses must be approved by the official spokesperson.

Corporate Communication should give priority to proactive media opportunities that protect and enhance the City’s reputation, and the balance of inquiries secondly.

MEDIA INQUIRIES TO CITY OFFICERS

Without prior approval of: Manager Corporate Communication and/or the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer or relevant Director, City officers must decline media opportunities.

If approval is provided, City officers can only give answers of fact and must not offer comments or opinions. The Chief Executive Officer, given the role, can provide greater detail when publicly discussing matters under his/her administration.

PROACTIVE MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Corporate Communication is responsible for developing and executing newsworthy media opportunities to reflect the priorities set out in the Budget and Corporate Plan, and in anticipation of significant Council decisions and projects.

Proactive media opportunities should be organised to ensure the participation of the official Council spokesperson. Divisional Councillors will be extended an invitation to attend media events held within their respective divisions. Equally, Councillors should as a courtesy advise the Mayor’s media staff of any media interviews they are undertaking on a City-Wide issue.

City officers are encouraged to contact Corporate Communication with items they believe merit media coverage and are consistent with Council’s priorities.

COUNCILLOR COMMUNICATIONS

External communications prepared by Councillors to be issued by or published at any cost whatsoever to Council must be in accordance with Council decisions and policies and not:

- bring the City, Council, Councillors, City officers into disrepute
- defame an individual or group
- contain information which is knowingly false or misleading
- divulge confidential information (as determined by Council)
- contain direct personal promotion, such as election campaign material

It is the responsibility of the author or authors of these materials to ensure accuracy, equity and fairness, and comply with legislation and Council requirements.
Councillors are to manage their own social media platforms. Corporate Communication has no role in the creation or management of any of these sites. While Councillors are not covered under the Social Media Policy, they must be cognisant of their responsibilities under the Local Government Act (Division 6 - Conduct and Performance of Councillors) and be aware that inappropriate use of the social media could be deemed Inappropriate Behaviour under the Local Government Act.

Corporate Communication controls official websites, Twitter, Facebook and other sites published at a cost to Council, on behalf of the organisation. This includes content.

REPRESENTING COUNCIL

City officers must secure permission from the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer or relevant Director and/or Corporate Communication before accepting speaking engagements. Where applicable, all presentations, videos, etc. must also be provided to the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer or relevant Director and Corporate Communication for approval.

This policy does not extend to day-to-day activities such as presenting to community groups and schools as part of the City's on-going programming.

If a presentation is accepted by a City officer as a private citizen, it must be made very clear to the audience that the comments are not related to the individual’s status as a City officer. Refer to the Code of Conduct for Employees for further information.

PRODUCT PUBLICITY

City officers must abide by the following guidelines in relation to suppliers wishing to obtain publicity from the fact that Council is using their products or services:

- City officers must refer all requests by suppliers for publicity to Corporate Communication. This includes case studies and all external communications.

- City officers should not offer testimonials for supplier products. This means that no photographs of Council people (identified either by logo, name or position title) are to appear in any medium, and no Council person or contractor is to be quoted in any supplier story, ‘case study’ or advertisement relating to a product or service. The Chief Executive Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer or relevant Director must approve exceptions, in liaison with Corporate Communication.

- Suppliers may issue media statements about Council using their product or service, but these must be written in the third person only. Any media statement written by a supplier mentioning Council must first be approved by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer or the relevant Director, in liaison with Corporate Communication.