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Extract from February 2015. Members Update,

Guidance in the run up to the elections – the period of electoral purdah

The provisions of the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011](#) apply to all town and parish councils.

During the run up to an election the Code contains relevant provisions which you need to be aware of paragraphs 33 – 35 (see below). This is often referred to as the "purdah" period and will start on 30 March 2015 and continue until the election.

"Elections, Referendums and Petitions. The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals, or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual councillors or groups of councillors. However, it is acceptable for the authority to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that their answers are factual and not party political. Councillors holding key political or civic positions should be able to comment in an emergency or where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control. Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve councillors likely to be standing for election".

During this period no town or parish council should publish publicity relating to particular individuals involved directly in the election. Publicity refers to any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public, or a section of the public, and could include news releases, newsletters, items on websites, advertising etc. The Code of Recommended Practice seeks to ensure that council resources and facilities are not perceived by the public to have been used for election campaigning or political purposes during the purdah period and that the political impartiality of employees has also been maintained.

The following points summarise the guidance for Councillors and council employees:

GREEN LIGHT: Acceptable Practice

Usual Business Matters:

- Publicity with Council quotes from Clerk only.
- Reactive publicity can include Councillors holding Civic positions if commenting in an emergency or a major news event outside the Council's control.
- Councillors can create their own individual, non political publicity.
- Councillors can attend events arranged by other organisations, but the same restrictions apply about quoting such events in any Council publicity.
- Decision-making will continue as usual, and the decisions will be publicised, subject to the restrictions about quotes.

AMBER LIGHT: Acceptable Practice; Proceed with Caution/ Seek Prior Advice

Quotations (direct / indirect):

- Councillors not involved in the election may make quotes or may be quoted if there are no political tones or references contained within the quotes.

- Avoid proactively scheduling events attracting public and media interest. Events that are unavoidable should not publicise individual councillors or their respective political parties and policies.

RED LIGHT: Unacceptable Practice; Do not Proceed

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- Councillors involved in the election will not be quoted in proactive news releases issued by the Council.
- Councillors involved in the election should not attend any events organised by the Council that may attract significant numbers of members of the public, or media interest.
- No election materials, political posters or leaflets must be displayed on any Council premises or property (including street furniture, notice boards, market stalls, web-site etc).