

NEC4

Term Maintenance Contract

Annex 08 – Media protocol DN581359

Commercial and Procurement Team

Somerset County Council

County Hall

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Media protocol

Section 1

1a - Key aims of the protocol *(contractor=supplier/Council=Somerset County Council Highways):

- The supplier assists in protecting the Council's reputation and image by supporting the Council's Communications Team and key Council Highways Officers to ensure a consistent, appropriate and professional approach when handling media enquiries.
- The supplier agrees to support the Council's key corporate aims.
- The supplier ensures all media enquiries are referred to the Council's Communications Team first in a timely manner and agrees to cooperate fully in providing all necessary assistance, support and information efficiently and promptly where required when the Council's Communication Team is generating media responses.
- The supplier agrees to mitigate risks of incorrect or conflicting messages being delivered to members of the public via the media.
- The supplier works in partnership with the Council's Communication Team where necessary to generate content and produce communication materials across its channels including press releases, social media content, briefings for Council Members and statements/responses.

1b - Who are the media?

- All journalists working for local, national, trade and international news outlets in print and online, broadcast media, and journalism students.
- Members of the public or organisations intending to communicate Council business online, in print or via social media.

1c - Protocol limits

- The Council has full control over all messages and content conveyed in its publications and across its channels.
- The Council has minimal or no control over external media (above), as long as published information is not defamatory or illegal.
- If any information which is deemed to be incorrect clarification will be requested. Advice on potential action will be taken if information is potentially defamatory or illegal.

1d – The Council Communications Team is responsible for:

- Protecting and enhancing the Council's reputation.
- Identifying and implementing all proactive communications.
- All information provided to the media and ensuring it is approved by relevant key officers and/or members.
- Monitoring media coverage
- Ensuring appropriate branding, on all publication materials.
- Running all social media platforms, as well as formulating and producing all content.

1e – The supplier is responsible for:

- When it becomes aware, promptly alerting Council Highways Officers and the Council Communications Team to any potential PR issues or adverse media coverage.
- Providing images and video from sites as required by the Council Communications Team which can be used on social media and other communications materials.
- Where relevant for selected important or unusual projects, the supplier agrees to arrange for drone video footage.
- Assisting fully in all reactive and proactive communications materials.

Section 2

2a - Reactive media relations

- The Council Communications Team is responsible for responding to all media enquiries and will lead on approach and content.
- The supplier agrees to co-operate fully in providing the necessary support to the Council Communications Team.
- The supplier does not approach the media directly.
- Communications issued from the Press Office will reflect the view of the County Council as a whole, not that of individuals, groups or political parties.
- If a member of the media contacts the supplier they will refer the enquiry immediately to the County Council Communications team by emailing pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk.
- The query will be logged by the Communications Team and dealt with.
- Communication Officers may come back to the supplier for information to help draft a response.
- The supplier will liaise closely with Highways teams in the event of extreme weather events/other extraordinary events and provide pictures, images and information as required.

2b - Proactive media

- The Council Communications Team will lead on all proactive PR materials – the supplier should alert the Team to potential opportunities.
- Press Releases are issued on the County Council's template system and must comply with County Council branding guidelines.
- Press Releases include one relevant quote from the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Digital or the Associate Lead Member, or in exceptional circumstances the ECI Director.

- The supplier will co-operate fully in providing pictures, video and information for materials.
- The supplier agrees to inform the Communications Team when a scheme is ahead of schedule and likely to finish early to allow for proactive communications.

2c- Social media

- The County Council Communications Team will handle content on its channels and will lead on any posts or comments in connection with Somerset County Council and supplier business.
- The Communications Team will monitor channels and comments/posts as far as possible.
- The supplier agrees to supply images, video and other information for the purposes of social media use.
- The supplier immediately contacts the County Council Communications team in the event of it becoming aware of adverse/negative comments/posts regarding Somerset County Council and supplier business on any social media channels .
- The Communications Team and supplier agree a strategy to cover adverse/extreme weather and other news-worthy events on social media channels.
- The supplier agrees to forward regular updates to the Communications Team from routine works involving road closures/significant traffic management, or other functions which may be deemed of interest to the public.
- The supplier agrees to provide images and/or video to support the above updates.

2d Elections

- The law states that Councils must not publish any material, which in whole or part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. The

Council is also prevented from giving financial or other support to any person to publish this type of material.

- All proactive publicity involving candidates, political parties and politicians involved directly with an election must stop from the issue of the notice of an election until after the result is formally announced.
- The statutory code emphasises that particular care should be taken in the period leading up to an election, when using simplified messages such as slogans, when referring to politicians or political issues and when commenting on controversial issues.
- During this period, publicity must not deal with views, proposals or recommendations in any way that identifies them with individuals, groups or parties involved in the election.
- Events arranged during this period must not involve anyone standing for election.

**For further information contact:
pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk**

**Drafted June 2022
By Andrew Doyle
Principle Communications Officers
Somerset County Council Highways and Transport**