

ADVICE FOR PARISHES: WHAT TO DO WHEN A REPORTER CALLS

1. Always be courteous; rude people make bad news.
2. If the call is unexpected, find out what they want and ask them to ring back in five minutes. This gives you time to think, and write out what you want to say, even if it's just a few bullet points. If you agree to ring them back, make sure you do.
3. When giving information to the media it is best to be factual and to the point but ALWAYS in a firm, friendly manner.
4. Answer questions in your own words and in complete sentences. A 'Yes' or 'No' to a loaded question can have startling consequences.
5. You're not bound to answer every question, so don't be bullied. Try to make sure that you control the interview in an astute and gentle way. If you have problems answering a question, don't flannel. If appropriate, tell the reporter you'll find out and call back.
6. Be positive - mere denials or 'no comments' suggests you have something to hide. This could be an opportunity to kill false rumours.
7. Mistakes multiply when people refuse to talk, so be helpful and the reporter will usually respond in the same way. If a call relates to an active police matter say so, and close the call politely with 'no comment to make'.
8. The reporter has column inches / air minutes to fill. Feed them your facts in a way that dictates the angle of the interview. If you don't want it reported, don't say it!
9. Never go "off the record". It just isn't worth it or safe. This is not to misjudge the reporter, rather if something is worth saying be honest and say it! NEVER try and pull rank on a reporter.
10. Remember: the media reaches people that you may never otherwise have the chance to speak to. Used carefully, it presents a real opportunity to tell your story.

You can always contact the communications office on 01865 208224 for advice and support on any media issue. Out of hours, you will be directed to a member of the team on a mobile phone.

