

Title: Staff Interaction with Parent Councils **Number:** D7 **Date Update** Nov 2010

1. The purpose of this document is to clarify the relationship between school staff and Parent Councils especially where there may be representatives of the media present or when the deliberations of Parent Councils may be reported in the media.
2. Scottish Borders Council Education & Lifelong Learning department wishes to ensure that frank and open discussion may take place at Parent Council meetings. However there is a potential conflict with this aim and with section 12.1 of Scottish Borders Council's 'Personnel Policies, Procedures and Guidelines' which states that:-
 - 'In the course of your employment with the Council, you should only make contact with the media or respond to the media where you have been authorised to do so by the Chief Executive, Director or Head of Service. Any such statement you make must reflect the policies and views of the Council. You must follow any Departmental instructions in the relation to contact with the media.'
3. Similarly there is a potential conflict with section 14, paragraph 14.1 of these 'Policies, Procedures and Guidelines' which states that :-
 - 'As members of the public, you are entitled to express your views about the Council, provided that you do not make use of any confidential information gained through your work with the Council. However, in your work capacity you should not knowingly criticise the Council either through the media or at a public meeting, or in any written or oral communication with members of the public.'
4. It is accepted that staff representatives may be co-opted onto Parent Councils and are present to inform the Parent Council of staff views, even when these may be in conflict with the views of the Education & Lifelong Learning Department and/or Scottish Borders Council. Staff representatives may therefore present Parent Councils with opinions which do not necessarily reflect Scottish Borders Council and Departmental policies or views and indeed may be opposed to these. In doing so they must not, however, talk directly or indirectly to the press or respond to the press although it is accepted that their views may be reported in the press and may even be directly attributed to them as most Parent Council meetings are public meetings at which the media and the public may be present. The minutes of Parent Council meetings are also publicly available documents and may be accessed and scrutinised by the media or the public and it is therefore accepted that staff views, which may be opposed to Departmental and/or Scottish Borders Council policies and views may be gleaned from these documents and attributed to specific members of staff.
5. Headteachers, or their representative, are required to give their views to Parent Councils on educational matters and the above paragraph also pertains to their interaction with Parent Councils and the media.
6. Parent Councils may request the presence of school staff other than the co-opted staff representatives and Headteachers (or their representative) to speak to Parent Council members on educational matters. Such staff are not required to be present but may agree to attend. Again paragraph 4 above, will govern the interaction of staff invited to attend Parent Council meetings, Parent Council members and members of the media and the public.

7. Other than this exemption in relation to Parent Councils, members of staff must adhere to the various sections of Scottish Borders Council's 'personnel Policies, procedures and Guidelines'. Unless they are acting in a capacity as a trade union representative in which case section 12.2 of Scottish Borders Council's 'Personnel Policies, procedures and Guidelines applies viz:-
 - 'The provisions set out in the previous paragraph do not apply to employees where they are acting in their capacity as trade union representatives and are communicating the view of their trade union to the media.'