

4.4 EDITORIAL POLICY

Issue No. 2 dated 17/05/2004

Ethical integrity is the cornerstone of our editorial policy. It is the principle by which we run all our papers, whether they be paid-for or free. Our papers must also be edited on the basis that they are intended to be read by whole families, and content must reflect this.

Within normal commercial constraints including planned editorial/advertising ratios and limitations on colour, the Group operates a policy under which the editor has freedom to edit without interference from general management, although this does not preclude management from making its views known. The editor is legally responsible for the entire content of the products he or she edits, including advertising. He or she is similarly responsible for the fairness and accuracy of all content. If errors occur, they must be corrected promptly and with the appropriate apologies, subject to legal requirements.

Editors and their staff must avoid overt and sustained political bias. As a general rule, our titles are expected to follow an issue-led agenda, not a party-political one. It is recognised that, in the interests of local democracy, the application of this policy may result in a title challenging or championing a specific political party on occasion.

Editors must ensure that they and their staff follow the current Code of Practice as set out by the Press Complaints Commission.

Editors are expected to make managing directors and senior commercial managers aware, in advance of publication, of any articles they believe may have an adverse commercial impact on the business. This is in the interests of good internal communications only, and does not over-ride the preceding point on editorial independence.

It is also Group policy that our newspapers make no mention of any competitor except in the context of a genuine news story. In particular, it is strictly contrary to Group policy for any newspaper to indulge in "knocking copy" relating to competitors.