

Communication & Engagement

17-002

Notes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2017 from 6.00pm to 7.15pm

Present: Parish Councillors Sam Lain-Rose, John Reardon, Joan Buller, Chris Claridge, Peter Spearink, Paddy Riordan, John Perry and Lawrence Whittle.

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Social Media

Parish Councillor Chris Claridge, further to his email to Council regarding his proposal to organise Social Media training for the Council, he explained further. It was discussed that the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce could provide a three-hour standard training session for £500. Parish Councillors felt that it was important to focus on Facebook, as the primary platform used within the village.

There were various discussions surrounding Facebook and the use and how the Council could maximise impact in communications with residents. The main points raised were:

- Communications should be consistent, and Councillors should respond with a 'corporate' line, to minimise personal attacks on personal opinions
- Social media content should be linked to website, and linking of discussions would streamline communication

There was a discussion regarding the Staplehurst Parish Council Facebook page and also the two community group pages, 'Staplehurst helping page' and 'A better community for Staplehurst'. It was thought, that the pages could be merged to become one cohesive group and area where residents can communicate about local issues. Parish Councillor Paddy Riordan undertook to discuss with the administrators of the two separate group pages.

There were also discussions about having communication guidelines and strategy. It was suggested that this could be within the remit of the Publicity & Website Group.

It was **AGREED** to recommend to the Council that the Clerk organises and coordinates training on Social Media, with the estimated financial impact being £500.

Staplehurst Parish Council

3. Communication (Generally)

Parish Councillor Peter Spearink wished to see the Village Update digitalised and be a monthly production. There were discussions regarding the Village Update and this would remain with the Publicity & Website Group to recommend to Council.

There were discussions that the Council needed to strategically explore the approach to communication, for example what type of communication channels are available, are there any duplications, the demographics of the audience, the frequency of the channel (i.e. annual, quarterly, monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, etc.)

Parish Councillor Paddy Riordan highlighted that Marden Parish Council provide new households/residents with a 'Welcome Pack' with relevant local information, to enable them to get involved and know what is going on within the village. Parish Councillor Sam Lain-Rose will investigate this and this can be given to Publicity & Website and/or Strategy & Policy.

Parish Councillors Peter Spearink and Chris Claridge left the meeting at this point.

4. E-mails

Parish Councillor John Reardon expressed a view that Parish Councillors should have domain-linked Parish Council email addresses. As it is evident that either historically or currently, email addresses are being shared and confidential information is being shared. In addition, there was a concern that based on a case in Hollingbourne where the parish council was going through legal proceedings due to a councillor email, of which the councillor resigned and the council did not have the email.

Parish Councillor Joan Buller left the meeting at this point.

Parish Councillor John Perry stated that Borough Councillors have this type of set up and he does not use it and emails are forwarded to his personal email address. However, he did recognise that there was a political element involved.

Parish Councillor Sam Lain-Rose declared an interest. However, added, that the benefit of having Parish Councillor email addresses would add a sense of security to the information being shared, distribution groups could be administered centrally and those members who wished to not use this could have an automatic forwarding facility to their personal email address.

Parish Councillor Lawrence Whittle stated that it would provide a sense of accessibility for residents to contact a specific Parish Councillor.

No further action was recorded on this, however, it was noted that the Parish Office would benefit from an upgraded email service and it was already being explored.