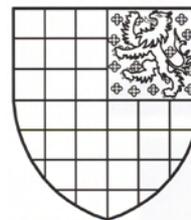


Town Hall  
High Street  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ [info@lewes-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@lewes-tc.gov.uk)

🌐 [www.lewes-tc.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-tc.gov.uk)



**LEWES  
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COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

of the meeting of the **Working Party** formed to consider Communications & public engagement held on **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016**, in the **Yarrow Room, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

**PRESENT** Cllrs S Catlin; H Jones; I Makepeace; S Murray; R O’Keeffe (*Chairman*); A Rowell and E Watts (*from 8:25pm*).

**In attendance:** S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*).

**ComWP2016/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Elliott, who had an unavoidable work commitment. No message had been received from Cllr Ashby.

**ComWP2016/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

**ComWP2016/11 QUESTIONS:** There were none

**ComWP2016/12 MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016 were received and signed as an accurate record, with a minor amendment requested by Cllr Rowell.

TC reminded Members that, to avoid Minutes becoming incomprehensible due to handwritten amendments, queries were best raised in advance of a meeting.

**ComWP2016/13 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

1 Members discussed social media use by the council, and there were various contributions from individuals as to their own experience of using facilities such as Facebook and Twitter. It was acknowledged that use by a Council could present issues for appropriate control, and TC advised that whilst the council had an adopted policy (as an appendix to the Communications Policy) this was modelled upon an “early” example published by Cornwall Council and a review would be appropriate. It was generally agreed that some examples of modern policies from other Councils should be obtained for consideration at the next meeting.

2 Further to the council’s agreement to a project to obtain a new website, TC had engaged in some research. He had met with colleagues from Hailsham Town Council, whose recent new website had been viewed favourably by Members at an earlier meeting. The company who had produced that site were local to Lewes, as were the other providers who had been asked to submit proposals. In researching additional local prospects a short list had evolved, of companies who offered suitable expertise and appropriate characteristics. One salient point had emerged in that the original suggestion to Council, that a budget of around £10,000 should be envisaged, was likely to prove the magnitude of expected cost. Non-specific discussions elicited from most potential contractors the view that a cost between £8,000 and £10,000 should be expected and this was borne-out by Hailsham’s experience. Council had approved up to £5,000 and this would need to be re-evaluated.

3 It was acknowledged that, in this field, providers could only commit modest resources to preparation of ideas before being commissioned, and conventionally they referred prospective customers to examples of work for previous clients. TC projected live to screen the websites of several prospects, specifically to highlight the style of their earlier work and the structure of any work they had done for local authorities or similar. These sites were referred-to as the discussion progressed, and some of their intrinsic features offered useful insight into the company’s approach to design and structure. It was recognized that much of the structure of modern website programming was ‘modular’ and elements such as the ability to embed

audio/video clips were commonplace. A Parish Council was unlikely to require elements such as online payment; maintenance of customer account records *etc*, such as would be needed for commercial trade. This meant that if a company had a suitable template, it may be straightforward to remove unwanted features/complexities. To progress further, it would be necessary to outline the key structural elements and features desired, and to this end TC distributed the “site-map” of the Council’s current website for Members to add/delete headings and suggest preferences for hierarchy of presentation. He presented a draft of a skeleton specification (listing required/desirable features) that had emerged from discussions with providers. This was intended as a starting-point and Members’ input was requested. A key point was to provide a site which offered the most user control and minimized dependence upon the provider for ongoing development of content. Members agreed a shortlist of three local companies with whom TC would pursue further detail, and they undertook to submit any comments regarding the structure/functionality/features to TC in the next two or three weeks.

4 There followed further discussion regarding integration of a new website with Facebook and Twitter, and the relative priorities. Live examples of how this worked were projected and various opinions expressed. Resources to manage input were discussed, and the restrictions on the ability for Parish Councillors to be authorized to execute functions. Members agreed to consideration of examples of modern social media policies as a specific item for the agenda of their next meeting, and would endeavour to draft a policy for recommendation to Council. TC would obtain suitable examples.

*Cllr Watts joined the meeting at this point*

5 The Council’s newsletter was discussed, and it was noted that no contributions of copy had been submitted to TC. The original publishing schedule would be circulated, and members could review this. There were significant developments in the Neighbourhood Plan to be announced, with a public exhibition and a six week consultation phase, and the annual ‘blanket-distribution’ edition would await details of that – shortly to be confirmed. Members were interested to see examples of previous editions. TC reminded members that copy could be submitted at any time, but should be relevant to the Council and its operations. All were encouraged to take and submit photographs, however ‘amateur’, if they attended an event or saw something that had some relevance. TC was happy to edit and produce newsletters, but a wide range of material was required to make them worthwhile and interesting, and a ‘stock’ of copy and photos was necessary to facilitate that.

**ComWP2016/14** The Working Party would next meet in 6-8 weeks’ time. A preference was expressed for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 7:00pm, subject to room and TC’s availability.

**ComWP2016/15** There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their attendance. *The meeting closed at 8:35pm*

Signed ..... date .....