

COMMUNICATIONS GROUP MINUTES – 19TH JUNE 2024

Present:

Cllrs. Castro (JC), Riordan (PR), Alesi (MA), Martin (AM)
Clerk (RG)

Apologies:

Cllrs. Arger and Sharp

Agenda:

Cllr. Castro was voted in unanimously as Chair. Cllr Martin to provide the minutes.

- **IT Review** – The Clerk talked through the papers on IT Review and IT Policy.
Main points: Sound system not included in this review, as from now on, council meetings will be held at Staplehurst Primary School, which is well equipped for presentations.
Project Plan - The aim of the plan is to save paper.
Package from contractor to be based on council equipment/software/security.
Cost will be significant, but PC can choose to purchase or lease. **ACTION: Communications group to consider both options.**
Whether councillors elect to have a laptop or notebook will depend on their personal preference and technical skill. **ACTION: RG to arrange for councillors to be surveyed to ascertain this.**
3 x IT companies have been contacted re package provision.
Re software – this will include Outlook 365, security and cloud storage. RG suggested that we might want to boost security. **ACTION: PR will find out what MBC use.**
Current provider (Arron Services) doesn't support web-based provision, only hosts.
New contractor would support transition, which would take place over a weekend and into the Monday. The Office staff will start to delete obsolete or unnecessary files/info, much of which goes back several years. **ACTION; Office to clear data.**
3 levels of access to be considered – admin/special areas for councillors/calendar plus.
Re Training – induction training for everyone. Ongoing training to ensure greater efficiency.
Passwords may be problematic, as people occasionally forget them.
Discussion re elimination of paper copies. Decision to phase this in gradually, but with a realistic target date. RG suggested that hard copy agendas would still be made available, which councillors could use for notes and annotation.
Further potential savings would be email, service support, Norton and Zoom.
RG also suggested a budgeted sinking fund for replacement equipment, If purchase is preferred over leasing.
ACTION; JC - A DECISION NEEDS TO BE MADE OVER WHAT IS TO GO INTO THE NEW CONTRACT.
- **IT POLICY** – RG has provided a draft IT policy, based on a similar version from Pembury PC. Councillors will be able to use their own phones for emails, however discussion re whether WhatsApp and texts would pose a problem. PR stated that MBC allows councillors to use their own phones.
A disclaimer will need to be signed by all councillors.
RG has written a Project Plan, with timescales. The red areas denote a council decision. The aim is for the new Outlook 365 system to be finalised and up and running by January 2025.

The new system hasn't been budgeted for currently, but can be part of 2025/6 budget, with costs paid from general reserves until then. RG has composed an introduction to PC for the website. **ACTION: RG to email to Communications Group for consideration.**

- **Matters arising from last minutes**

Annual Report feedback: Ladies Choir have asked to be included next time in Groups section.

ACTION: JC – Make a rota of all village groups to be included in the future.

Re posting to rural homes. Discussion re reducing pages to allow 2nd class postage size, with full version to be posted on website. Or possibly find a sponsor to pay for postage to rural areas. **ACTION PR and JC will take on some of the deliveries. Further volunteers needed. JC to send out an email to councillors for help. Facebook request may still be needed.**

ACTION: JC to ask Jean Terry to research cost of postal deliveries to rural homes.

- **LOGO** -good feedback received.

- **Fleece jackets/id cards – ACTION: PR to get costings from Iden Signs re charcoal grey coloured hoodie/sweatshirt/polo shirt all with logo, plus hi=viz with logo.**

ACTION: PR to get costings for ID cards/business cards from Paxman/Iden Signs.

- **Communications publications schedule**

JC talked through a paper on An Effective Communications Strategy.

Re Chair's report **ACTION: PR ask Megan to add subtitles to video. Ask Jean T. to post on Facebook and YouTube.** Report will focus on things SPC has achieved or is working on, to include credit to the specific groups involved. Also to advertise volunteer events.

Video dates confirmed as 12/4, 19/7, 27/9, 20/12.

- **Autumn Village Update** – articles to be requested by early August. Historical element to be retained. **ACTION: JC to enlist further help from Tom Burnham.**

Positive advertising for volunteers. Suggestion that there could be interviews with prominent villagers, starting with the recipients of award winners, Linda Savage and Chris Relph. Also, an explanation of the LOGO, its meaning and design.

- **Information Booklets** – idea is to produce a booklet, which could be of help/advice to prospective councillors or new residents. For the latter, this could include a map of Staplehurst's green areas for example. **ACTION – JC – Map**

ACTION: MA – To champion this initiative.

- **Email received from printing firm. ACTION: PR to provide a sample booklet and business card/ID card to andy@howlingbasset.co.uk to get a quote for printing. This can then be compared with quotes from Paxman and Jackie Barker (MA 's contact)**

- **AOB** – None

- **Next Meeting – 17th July 2024**