

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy, Resources and Communications Committee Meeting held on 23 July 2015 at 7.30 pm in the Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks.

Present: Judith Foot (Chairman) Frances Gaudencio
Ian Credland Peter Gibbons
Justine Fisher Sue Hatton
David Cumberland Ian Weir

Clerk: Linda Baker

1. **Apologies for Absence.** None.
2. **Declarations of Interest.** None.
3. **Appointment of Committee Chairman for 2015/16.** Judith Foot was elected to chair the committee for 2015/16.
4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2015.** The minutes were taken as read, agreed by the meeting, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
5. **To review and Update the Committee Terms of Reference.** The Terms of Reference were noted. It was agreed to change the reference to the "Police Panel" to "Police Liaison Committee".
6. **Communications.**
 - a) **A Strategy for Communications for the Parish Council.**

It was suggested that as the community was changing, and the ways in which people communicated were changing, the Parish Council needed a clear communications strategy rather than a piecemeal approach. The council needed to be more pro-active in publicising the work it was doing, needed to engage more with other groups in the village, and needed to define what the purpose of its communications were, and what media would be best suited to achieve its aims.

RESOLVED that Frances Gaudencio, Justine Fisher and Ian Weir would consider the issues raised and produce a paper on a communications strategy for consideration at the 22 October 2015 PR&C meeting. If members had any ideas or issues they wished to be considered as part of the review they should contact the group.

- b) **To consider the appointment of a Councillor to improve and diversify the Parish Council's electronic communications systems.**

The Parish Council's website had been overseen by two councillors in consultation with the Office Assistant responsible for updating the site, but the councillors had retired at the May 2015 elections. It was agreed that the website, and the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts should be looked at in the context of a communications strategy, as discussed in 6 (a) above. Among the suggestions discussed was employing an

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apprentice to act as a social media co-ordinator, or employing an IT consultant to review the technical solutions currently in place in the parish office and make recommendations on how the council should be delivering its contacts via social media. It was agreed that before considering any of these options, Justine Fisher would discuss with the Clerk and Tracy Bates how electronic communication was currently used, and report back as part of the review of the council's communications strategy.

c) To agree Councillors to carry out regular reviews of the Parish Council's Website.

This would be dealt with as part of the communications and electronic communications reviews as above.

d) To consider a Policy on Issuing Press Releases. The Parish Council's Standing Orders, paragraph 25, provide that all requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the council shall be dealt with by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman. It was suggested that this requirement could cause delays and clarification was needed in the case of newsletters or statements on Facebook or Twitter. The policy would be reviewed in the context of the communications review.

7. To explore the possibility of extending the Ground Floor Area of the Parish Centre to create a more welcoming, open and efficient use of space. A proposal was made that an architect should be asked to look at extending the ground floor to create a larger reception area and create more office and storage space. It was agreed that before the council approached an architect, consideration would need to be given to what the council required in terms of office, storage and reception space, and that the parish office staff should be consulted. RESOLVED that Judith Foot and Ian Weir would consult the parish office staff and draw up a brief for extending the ground floor, which would be considered at the next meeting of the committee.

8. To consider Refurbishing the Reception Area of the Parish Office. This would be included in considering the extension of the Parish Centre, as in 7 above.

9. To appoint a Sub-Committee to meet the requirements of the Local Council Award Scheme. The Local Council Award Scheme had replaced the Quality Council Status scheme, and the Parish Council had been accredited with Foundation status for a year automatically when its Quality Council registration ended in March 2015. It was agreed to reconsider the question of applying for renewal under the Local Council Award Scheme in 2016 at a later date.

10. To consider the Parish Council's role in supporting Economic Development and Tourism to take into account the findings of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group's research.

RESOLVED that a group comprising Justine Fisher, Judith Foot, Frances Gaudencio and Ian Weir would consider the Parish Council's role in

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supporting economic development and tourism, and put proposals to the next meeting of the committee.

11. Parish Council Policies and Procedures. Copies of the council's policies and procedures had been circulated to the committee and they would be reviewed as necessary in the context of the initiatives being considered by the committee as above.

12. Parish Office Opening Hours. It was noted that the Parish Council Chairman had instructed the Clerk to change the public opening hours of the Parish Office with effect from 1 June 2015, following a meeting between the Chairman, Ian Weir and Ian Credland. Some members expressed concern that this had been done without discussion by the Parish Council, or input from Parish Office staff. The changes had caused some initial administrative difficulties and had not to date lead to any increase in public visits.

13. Office Staffing Resource. The five day public opening, and additional demands on the Parish Office, required additional staff resource and it was RESOLVED that the hours of one of the Office Assistants should be increased by two hours per week with immediate effect to provide this resource.

14. Date of Next Meeting. 22 October 2015 at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....

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