

MINUTES OF INFORMING AND ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES TASK GROUP

21 JUNE 2018

PRESENT:

Members of the Group: Councillors Bearne, Douglas, Claire Edwards, Gillias, Keeling, Lewis and Srivastava

Officers: Matthew Deaves (Communication, Consultation and Information Manager) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED THAT – Councillor Keeling be appointed Chair of the Task Group for the duration of the review.

2. DISCUSSION WITH THE COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION MANAGER

Prior to the meeting, the task group received the following documents as part of their agenda:

- One-page strategy (Appendix 1)
- Communication Strategy 2014 (Appendix 2)
- Web Content Standards 'Golden Rules' (Appendix 3)
- 'New Conversations' LGA Guide to Engaging Communities was circulated via a link due to the size of the document with a small number of printed copies provided at the meeting.

Communication Strategy 2014

- The Communication Strategy was adopted by Council in 2014 and has since been informally reviewed.
- The strategy sets out how the Council will communicate with its' residents, businesses, visitors and staff. The Council's communications will be direct, digital, devolved, data-led and deliberate. Summary of each communication and related actions can be found within Appendix 2 of the agenda.
- The most effective communication method is email. It is the middle ground between social media and the more traditional ways of sharing information (press, radio, etc).
- The advantage of digital content is that it is only created once and disseminated through a number of platforms.
- Analytics show that, in the evenings and during weekends, the Council's website is accessed by members of the public via their mobile phones. During the working week and working hours, the data is affected by the Council's staff use of the website to access information.

- Any problems reported by public when engaging with the website outside of public hours are dealt with promptly on the next working day.
- Web content standards are in place to ensure that the right content and right services are accessible on all types of devices and at all times of the day and night.
- An easy to understand way of presenting complex data to residents is by using good graphic designs. A picture or graph can be more effective to relay a complicated message such as a breakdown of a council tax bill.
- The biggest challenge faced by the Communications Team is effective planning. A forward plan to inform a fully planned and cohesive campaign would be ideal.

Web Content Standards 'Golden Rules'

- The Council website was recently reviewed and a lot of content was removed.
- The website is intended to provide information for members of public not for staff. If there is sufficient demand for any particular information, it can be added to the website.
- Google analytics are used to identify search terms to inform the website. The Communications Team undertakes regular reviews of terms used. The aim is to be consistent through the Council when sending out messages to the public. Issues arise when other parts of the sector sent out messages with conflicting information which causes confusion. Communication has to be very clear when responding back to avoid further confusion and distress to the public.

'New Conversations' LGA Guide to Engaging Communities

The task group felt that the document provided some useful information. In particular, pages 42 and 43 of Section One: The Basics were of an interest. Copies are annexed to the minutes.

During the discussion, the following additional comments were made:

- Communities in Rugby are very complex. Through social media platforms, officers are able to breakdown users by gender, age, country of origin and other characteristics available.
- The corporate Facebook page has a large number of Eastern European followers. Facebook has launched a new feature that lets users translate posts and comments on Facebook pages into their native language.
- The distribution list for the Council's news releases includes:
 - all news media;
 - councillors;
 - Senior Management Team;
 - Contact Centre; and
 - parish councils (if they have asked to be included).
- Parish councils are periodically contacted by officers to see whether they wish to be added to the distribution list. Parish councils that are on the distribution list may use the Council's new releases as they see fit.

The Council has recently engaged with communities on the following:

- *Local Plan* is a notable example of good engagement and officers are learning from the process.
- *Public Spaces Protection Orders Review*
- *Whitehall Recreation Ground Improvements*
- *Rugby Art Gallery and Museum* – Heritage Lottery Fund bid to expand the local Social History display

The following detail was provided by the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager on the *Garden Waste* campaign for 2018/19:

- Notice in council tax bills with different web urls used
- 22,000 stickers purchased
- 15,000 email addresses supplied
- 2/3 of stickers purchased via website
- 33 per cent purchased via phone for various reasons
- The objective for 2018/19 was to exceed the sign up to garden waste collection service from 2017/18. The target has almost been achieved.
- This year's campaign will be evaluated, success of each element tracked and lessons learned to plan for 2019/20.

The Communication, Consultation and Information Manager highlighted that not all members of public want to be involved in consultations. Each campaign is targeted and focused which will attract people that have an interest in the area and/or they are directly affected.

The task group was informed of a potential new project proposal. The project could be explored further by the task group and will involve the relevant head of service.

The task group agreed that -

- The digital method of communication is more efficient but not all members of the public have access to electronic devices or are computer-savvy. This is a gap that needs to be addressed.
- It is important to also focus on the content provided to members of the public rather than the method alone.
- Rugby Borough Council, being a two-tier authority, can cause confusion to a members of the public with regards to the responsibilities of each authority. Members felt that a breakdown of responsibilities for a parish council, the Rugby Borough Council and the Warwickshire County Council would be useful to residents. The Communication, Consultation and Information Manager informed the task group that this can be address with appropriate graphics via social media and reposted on a regular basis.

One-page strategy

The task group considered the one-page strategy for the review that was circulated as part of the agenda.

The broad aims of the review were defined as 'suitable ways of involving communities in decisions that affect them; and information and tools provided to

council teams and to members, so that they can inform and engage communities where relevant’.

The one-page strategy was agreed by the task group, subject to:

What is the specific topic area?

The following paragraph to be amended to read: ‘The review will look at including a range of new media ~~tools~~ that members and relevant officers can use, together with a refreshed package of traditional engagement techniques.’

Who shall we consult?

It was suggested that the following groups are added to the list:

- Residents who do not use social media
- Residents’ associations
- Schools
- Warwickshire County Council
- Parish councils

3. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the task group will be held on Tuesday 24 July at 5.30pm where the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager will present the following:

- the new project proposal if agreed by the relevant head of service;
- analysis on information shared on traditional and other format platforms and their effectiveness;
- breakdown on how many parish council have a publication and have requested to receive the Council’s news releases;
- draft schedule of work.

CHAIR

What stage of the decision-making process are we at?

Below is a table for the different channels and methods you should use depending on how far advanced you are in the process. The idea, of course, is that once you're past the initial stage of just beginning to talk, the rest should follow fairly naturally, as you become more familiar with stakeholders.

Where are you?	Communication	Engagement methods	Information
Just beginning to talk	Exploratory style focused on gauging awareness	Focus groups and research surveys	Introducing initial thoughts
It's out there and people are talking	Setting the agenda and communication of clear direction	Feedback sessions, deliberative events and co-production	Explanatory, making a case for the direction
Plans are receiving feedback and we're working on it	Formal communication that invites feedback	More formal planning and impact sessions	Detailed plans and the impacts, roles and responsibilities
Decisions have been made and we're dealing with the consequences	Directional communication, front-line teams and others delivering messages	Face-to-face with front-line teams and individual correspondence; high level support for transition	Guidance on what happens following decisions

What resources do you have and what limitations apply?

We can all design the perfect engagement process given a blank sheet of paper, but in reality the paper is rarely blank. Restricted budgets and legal requirements about timelines mean that your goal is effective and efficient engagement rather than perfect engagement. To achieve that you need to identify and prioritise the resources at your disposal. These might include:⁴⁰

- input by staff, volunteers and other interested stakeholders
- background information or briefing papers on the issues or plan proposals

⁴⁰ See [The community planning toolkit](#)

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New Conversations LGA guide to engagement

- independent facilitation
- communication and promotion, venue hire, transport, childcare, translation
- printing and circulating a report for provision of feedback
- resourcing local community and voluntary groups to (where necessary) support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals.

You need to have a budget that matches the scale and scope of the process. You will have defined that when you set out your objectives and likely stakeholders. If there is a mismatch, then either ambition or budget must give way. Before dropping anything from your engagement plan, make sure you consider the statutory requirements.

What methods should I choose?

The below, again taken from the [community planning toolkit](#), is a list of the different types of engagement type you might consider. All of these are defined more fully in [the Glossary](#).

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| • art and creativity | • deliberative events | • consensus building |
| • community mapping | • web based consultation | • citizens' panel |
| • planning for real © | • future search | • street stalls |
| • public meetings | • open space technology | • questionnaires |
| • focus groups and workshops | • citizens' juries | • local community meetings |

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Introduction



Which hat are
you wearing?



Context



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The Basics**



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