

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF SYRESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

held on **Monday 15th May 2023**,

at 7.30pm in the Village Hall Meeting Room, Main Road, Syresham, NN13 5HE

Present: Cllr I Draper (Vice Chairman), Cllr D Cranwell, Cllr J Haycock, Cllr H MacIver
Mrs S Hosking (Clerk to the Council)
1 member of the public present

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

No comments from members of the public.

MINUTES

1. Receive and approve apologies for absence.
Apologies received from Cllr D Dunkley (Chairman), Cllr C Munsey, Cllr D Green
Cllrs called away due to work or emergencies.

RESOLVED: Apologies approved.

In the absence of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Cllr Draper chaired this meeting.

Cllr Draper felt that, as only four Councillors were in attendance, general decisions on such an important subject would not be made at this meeting. Instead a review of the training and information would be carried out and initial suggestions noted to bring to another Communications and Engagement meeting to be called at a future date.

2. To receive declarations of interest under the Council's Code of Conduct related to business on the agenda.
None to declare.
3. Receive the Clerk's report on Building a Communications Strategy training.
Information and a report from the meeting was circulated to Councillors. The Clerk highlighted the section outlining 8 steps to building a Communications Strategy:
 1. Agree the **purpose** of the strategy, what you're trying to achieve and the **approach** you will take.
 2. Review the council's **current and previous communications**.
 3. Use **SWOT** (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) to analyse internal and external issues affecting your communications.
 4. Consider your council's objectives and develop **SMART* communications objectives**.
 5. Consider your **messages for different audiences**, as well as **positioning and tone**.
 6. Consider **appropriate communication channels** for different messages and audiences.
 7. Put together a resource appropriate plan of work to implement the strategy and consider key metrics.
 8. **Review, review, review.**

** SMART – Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound*

Initial suggestions:

- How does the Parish Council encourage engagement? Need to find someone skilled in modern IT to help advise on making better use of social media/technology for engagement.
- Renew website. Consider an easier to use platform that can be set up showing half Parish Council business and half Community business. Possible to also include functionality to sign up to email alerts.
Action: Councillors to review other Parish Council websites, list the ones that are preferred and bring back to the next engagement meeting a list of website providers who created the preferred websites.
- Consider a village App, like the Brackley App to provide all kinds of Community, Business and Parish Council information.
- Welcome Pack – Update this, distribute and meet new residents again.
- Accessibility – Make sure residents can feel that they can access all Councillors. Most Councillors are already approached by residents when out and about in the village. Can this be improved so that everyone knows who their Councillors are and how to contact them?
- **Action: Councillors** to consider drawing up their own SWOT diagram, especially looking at strengths and weaknesses. Remember Communication is two-way.

4. Receive Local Authorities Public Engagement training recordings.
Those who attended the training felt that it was not particularly helpful. It did give Councils the opportunity to see what other Councils are doing, but didn't dig deeper and explain a recommended approach.

Initial Suggestions –

- Perhaps Councillors need to go out and stop residents in the street and ask them how they want the Parish Council to engage with them. Or send out a questionnaire.
 - PC Facebook – currently we prefer to switch off comments on posts, but perhaps it would be better to have comments, to allow residents a way of communicating with the Parish Council.
 - It is possible to set up direct messaging from Facebook so residents could direct message individual Councillors. There was some concern about this, when a Parish Council needs to keep track of all communications for the sake of transparency. Would this open the Parish Council up to issues with accusations about spreading untruths, bullying, harassment?
5. Review current methods of communication between the Parish Council and the public along with alternative communications options. Discuss their effectiveness in delivering various types of communications. Also, consider what is communicated and how often.
As discussed above.
6. Review current methods of public engagement and alternative engagement options and discuss which options should be adopted and how often.
As discussed above.
7. Consider uploading all non-confidential committee agendas and minutes to the village website along with full Parish Council minutes.
RESOLVED: The Parish Council will publish all Committee Agendas and Minutes on the website. But will need to consider any parts of Committee meetings that need to remain Private and Confidential.
8. Devise Parish Council Strategy and Policy for Communications and Public Engagement.
Cllr Cranwell has found Government Guidelines for Engagement strategies
Action: Cllr Cranwell to circulate the above guidelines to the rest of the Parish Council.
Action: Councillors will research other Councils' policies and bring them back to the next Communications and Engagement meeting.
RESOLVED: The Parish Council commits to setting an action plan with a responsible Councillor for ensuring the work in collating information and creating an Engagement and Communications policy reaches a conclusion.

The member of the public was asked their opinion on Parish Council engagement:

- Canvassing the public would be a good idea.
 - Adding functionality in Facebook to contact Councillors
 - SWOT analysis will help.
9. Proposal to close the meeting to the public and press to allow discussion of private and confidential information.
RESOLVED: The meeting was closed to the public and press.
10. Receive recommendations from the Staffing Committee on the appointment of a new Clerk.
Recommendations were received from a representative of the Staffing Committee.
11. Confirm date of next Parish Council meeting.
Annual meeting of the Parish Council Wednesday 17th May

Meeting closed at 8.10pm



Mrs Samantha Hosking, Syresham Parish Clerk
tel: 01280 851178
email: parishclerk@syresham.com

Copies of all council papers are available to download at www.syreshamvillage.com