

## **TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL – INTERNAL COMMITTEE**

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

#### **NOTES OF A MEETING ON 9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2017 AT 7.00 PM**

**Present:** Cllr. Sue Ferguson, Cllr. Ken Mulholland, Cllr. Justin Nelson, Cllr. Alan Sugden, John Crawford, Lorna Jones, Matthew Meredith, Tash Mahoney, Peter Rosling, Samantha Reed, Graham Wise, James Sinclair, Roger Quinton, Sue Quinton, Seren Welch. Claire Gilbert took notes.

- 1. Apologies for Absence.** Cllr. Callum Knowles.
- 2. Appointment of Chairman.** Cllr. Alan Sugden suggested that he was Chairman for the first meeting.
- 3. Minutes.** None (first meeting).
- 4. Matters Arising.** None.
- 5. Suggestions for Methods of Public Engagement Both Within and Outside Committees.**
  - 5.1 Peter Rosling reported that the Future of Tenterden Facebook page was set up nearly four months ago because of a lack of communication between the public and council. The group covers a range of age groups. Peter was interested to know what the council had done in the past with regard to public engagement.
  - 5.2 Cllr. Justin Nelson informed the Committee that minutes were one way of communicating; councillor surgeries have not worked in the Town and this may be due to members of the public being able to pop into the Town Council office and report any issues or ask questions. However, St. Michaels councillor surgeries have been better attended. There is also the newsletter, Town Council website and Facebook and Twitter.
  - 5.3 James Sinclair asked what had been the most successful public engagement in the past. Cllr. Alan Sugden reported that the first Tent1 Consultation (2012/13) was the most successful. Public turnout tends to be dependent on the subject matter.
  - 5.4 Samantha Reed reported that the Council comes across as too exclusive and some public feel like they are not wanted at meetings. Tash Mahoney did respond that the committee meetings are improving with input from the public not so fixed with time restraints.
  - 5.5 Alan Sugden reported that mainly the older generation attend meetings. Parish meetings are generally boring day to day business and minutes take too long to be circulated.
  - 5.6 Lorna Jones raised the issue that some people do not have access to either the internet or social media and are more reliant on newsletters and the local newspaper. Members of the Committee commented that the Kentish

Express does not include as much of the business discussed at Council meetings like it used to, but Peter Rosling did point out that ways of reporting have moved on.

- 5.7 John Crawford asked the question 'why isn't the public interested in what the council does?' and suggested having a column in the local paper once a month with what is going on at the Council. Roger Quinton reported that members of the public feel like they put their views and ideas across but are then ignored.
- 5.8 Cllr. Sue Ferguson reported that Cllr. Knight had asked the Council to implement a system of timelining outstanding actions from meetings. John Crawford would like to see the Council feed-back action that has been taken. John also observed that the Council comes across as stuffy and loves to follow regulations and would like to see meetings become more interesting and conversations taking place.
- 5.9 James Sinclair conveyed that some members of the public might read the headlines, but will not attend meetings or read the minutes.
- 5.10 Tash Mahoney reported that Frome Council's idea of conducting less formal meetings seem to work well. Councillors are spread amongst the public with one or two councillors per table and then the rest public. Each table would then discuss and topic before going to vote.
- 5.11 Peter Rosling suggested relaxing committee agendas and requested clarification on what the Standing Orders were. Justin Nelson responded that some of the Standing Orders are compulsory, others are guided by the National Association for Local Councils and the Council include their own.
- 5.12 Graham Wise suggested conducting a public survey, either via the Newsletter or online. Seren Welch reported that surveys could be conducted online (survey monkey), a 1 in 5 pedestrian survey, emails out with the link to the online survey to residents but also target all ages, for example, Homewood School. Samantha Reed suggested engaging local businesses too by asking them to hand out a paper survey.

Seren suggested that one of the questions included would be 'what are the top five priorities that you would like to see the Council consider'. Once these are known to the Council then they would become priorities until dealt with. Seren also suggested coding the minutes from meetings in either red or amber which is currently the system the NHS use.

- 5.13 Alan Sugden suggested putting a regular list in the Kentish Express of the main points being discussed by the Council. Roger Quinton suggested that better advertising should take place of any changes suggested in the Town, for example, any changes to the play park there could be signs up informing parents of the proposed changes and allowing them time to attend the relevant meetings where it would be discussed.
- 5.14 Peter Rosling requested clarification as to who writes the articles for the newsletter as the content requires further discussion. Justin Nelson reported that the delivered newsletter is now published bi-annually and there will be a mini newsletter in between those times which will be available from the Town Hall or can be emailed to residents who provide

their email address. It will also be uploaded on the Council's website and social media pages.

- 5.15 Samantha Reed suggested putting a tv monitor in the Town Hall window which displays what is happening at the Council, i.e. a newsfeed. John Crawford reported that the Town Hall Focus Group were also discussing the idea. Claire Gilbert will investigate the cost.
- 5.16 Seren Welch reported that there would need to be a 9% uptake to make the footfall survey work. Seren suggested that the survey is carried out by volunteers or an independent company rather than by Councillors. James Sinclair questioned why the survey would just be for residents and not visitors as changes to the Town would affect them as well. Lorna Jones requested that a postage survey was conducted as well in order to target those with no internet access.
- 5.17 Seren advised that ways of including various groups should be explored, i.e. visit the various local organisations and ask to speak at one of their meetings.
- 5.18 Alan Sugden and Peter Rosling both suggested buying a quarter or half page in the Kentish Express and also advertise in the Wealden Advertiser on a regular basis. Claire Gilbert to find out the costs involved.
- 5.19 Tash Mahoney raised the issue of safeguarding on social media and advised that councillors needed to take more care when commenting. Although Councillors might be commenting personally, they are still seen as in their role as a Councillor. Seren suggested that Councillors take it in turns to write articles or respond to media questions rather than it being the same people. It would also enable the public to more easily identify who all the councillors were.
- 5.20 Sue Quinton suggested making Councillor Surgeries into coffee mornings where public could pop along and meet a Councillor if they wished to and might be more appealing. It was also suggested that they could take place at different venues rather than the Town Hall.
- 5.21 The Committee recapped on the key points raised at the meeting and these would be circulated to members of the public.
- 6. Recruitment of Additional Members.** The Sub-Committee needed to be advertised more widely as many residents did not know it was happening. However, there was a great attendance at this first meeting.
- 7. Any Other Business.** It was agreed that Peter Rosling would become the Chairman of the Sub-Committee.
- 8. Date of Next Meeting.** Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 7.00 pm at the Town Hall.

Meeting Closed at 9.10 pm.