

North Hinksey Parish Council Communications Committee Report to the full Council
11th April 2017
Chairman: Cllr Lorna Berrett

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1. About the Communications Committee:

Parish Council sets up a Communications Committee to replace the previous Communications Working Group and Website Working Group. The remit of this new Committee would be to review all current methods of communication, both internal and external, and to recommend to Council improvements to the content, structure and frequency of those communication methods. Also the Committee should identify additional methods of communication not currently used, and recommend how best to use them to improve the effectiveness of Council communications.

The first Committee meeting was held on 3rd April 2017. A number of recommendations were made at the meeting that are now being presented to the full Council.

2. Communications plan for NHPC objectives

Five objectives were adopted by the Council in June 2016 and have been communicated to Parishioners via the NHPC website, newsletter and Facebook page as well as in the minutes of the Council meetings displayed on noticeboards. The Communications Committee discussed the need to update Parishioners on progress against these objectives. It was proposed to add a sentence update on each objective to appear on a new page on the website. Cllrs Kay and Potter agreed to provide the text updates for agreement by the full Council as follows:

- **To provide an improved range of leisure and recreational facilities within the Parish.**
Update April 2017: The Leisure Working Group, a sub-committee of the Recreation & Amenities Committee, recently undertook surveys with local young people and with elderly / mobility impaired parishioners to explore if there was current demand for additional leisure facilities for these two groups, and if so what facilities the Parish Council might consider providing. The results of these consultations are available on the R&A page of the parish council website, and full Council will consider the Leisure Working Group's recommendation at its April meeting.
- **To support, manage and improve spaces, buildings and services that are the Parish Council's responsibilities.**
Update April 2017: In December 2016 full Council passed a motion to express in-principle support of a budget proposal put forward by local Vale District Councillors that would designate District Council funds for improvements to leisure facilities in Botley, in particular the Louie Memorial Pavilion. The budget proposal has since been passed by the Vale, and NHPC remain closely involved in discussions about how this funding will be used. In the first instance a Leisure Officer will be appointed by the Vale, who will be expected to work with NHPC to project-manage work towards improving the Louie Memorial Pavilion and its surrounding space.

- **To work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the redevelopment of Botley Centre proceeds with as little disruption as possible to the activities of residents and local businesses.**

Update April 2017: NHPC has attended the Community Liaison Group meetings, most recently on 10th April, and members have had direct meetings with Mace to gain clear and detailed information on the changing project management plans for implementing the Botley Centre redevelopment scheme. At these meetings we presented the case for continuity of services, provision of suitable temporary facilities, appropriate access and worked to influence important aspects of the plans before they are finalised to ensure the revised plans will meet community requirements during the works.

- **To actively support the production and full implementation of an effective Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish.**

Update April 2017: North Hinksey Parish Councillors continue to play a leading role in developing the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, which now includes a number of identified planning policies. We hope this will be available for parishioners to view as a complete Plan in late 2017. NHPC as a whole will be heavily involved in the implementation of many aspects of the Plan after its adoption.

- **To support the setting up of a new charity enabling a range of services currently offered by Elms Road Children's Centre to continue in the long term, following the withdrawal of County Council funding.**

Update April 2017: Individual Councillors have provided support and advice in the process of setting up and gaining initial funds for the new charity Botley Bridges, which is now operational and providing a number of key services. NHPC is due to consider a grant request from Botley Bridges for £5,000 shortly.

The Communications Committee recommends that the Council AGREE these updates to be communicated to Parishioners via the website and other channels.

3. NHPC website update and proposed upgrade

As a Parish Council we are required to host, maintain and update a website to provide access to key information to our Parishioners. Some of this information is a mandatory legal requirement and the website is also an important information source for the community. The present website has not been upgraded since it launched to take advantage of advances in website functionality or to take account of changes in behaviour by users such as the increased use of mobile phones and tablets to access the Internet.

Upgrading the website to a more current content management system would allow for more modern layout options, more flexibility to change pages and layout ourselves and the opportunity to make the website "responsive" meaning it would recognise the size of screen a visitor was using (e.g. mobile or tablet) and rearrange the page for optimum readability and usability, rather than simply shrinking the whole site as is the case now.

Options for upgrade include staying with current provider Vision ICT and upgrading from Version 4 to Version 6, or moving to a new provider. Any future web-site must be a system that current and future councillors and the Parish Clerk would find easy to use and update. The Chairman, Councillor L. Berrett has obtained a quote for £725 from Vision ICT. This is a one-off fee plus the usual ongoing maintenance costs of £300 per year which would not increase beyond the annual inflationary increases.

The Communications Committee proposes that NHPC AGREE to issue a tender document [Appendix 1] for 4 to 5 suppliers in addition to Vision ICT to obtain comparative quotes.

In discussions with Vision ICT we learned that any move of websites to new systems recommends only the last 2 years of minutes be included. Currently the NHPC website goes back 12 years with Minutes. In discussing a new website the Communications Committee discussed how far back archives should go online.

The Communications Committee recommends to Council that minutes and agendas over 5 years old be archived and a note put on the web-site informing users that file copies could be obtained from the Parish Clerk.

4. Sprout articles proposed schedule

It is recognised that The Sprout newsletter has wide distribution to all households in the Parish and is an important communications channel for the Council to reach Parishioners with news and updates. A schedule for the rest of the year was discussed.

The Communications Committee proposes the following update articles be produced to be included on forthcoming Sprout editions, subject to agreement by the relevant councillors below.

- May 2017 – Chairman’s update – Cllr Kay – to include details of the defibrillators being installed within the parish and an update on the proposed re-development of the West Way Shopping Precinct and associated buildings.
- June 2017 – Allotments – Cllr MacKeith
- July 2017 – Leisure – Cllr Potter
- September 2017 – Redevelopment including Seacourt Hall – Cllr Kay / Cllr Berrett
- October 2017 – Communications Group - Cllr Berrett
- November 2017 – Planning and Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Pritchard
- December 2017 – Remembrance Day Service – Cllr Carr

5. Other communications channels: Social Media and e-Newsletter

Facebook:

The number of users has been steadily increasing, currently there are 115 followers of the site with some posts reaching two or three times that number with sharing. The Facebook page allowed for timely information to be communicated widely.

E-newsletter:

Last year’s e-newsletter did not manage to get many subscribers although it reached a wide audience through the website and Facebook page. The Communications Committee agreed an e-newsletter is useful in providing summaries of council work and should be prepared on a quarterly basis with a limited supply of printed versions distributed as needed and posted on noticeboards as well as links on the NHPC website and Facebook as before. A further suggestion was to have the e-newsletters report progress on the council’s key objectives as discussed above.

The Communications Committee proposes that the next e-newsletter would be prepared in September 2017 and an attempt would be made to promote the e-newsletter to generate more subscriber.

APPENDIX 1: Tender document for upgraded website

Background:

North Hinksey Parish Council website can be found at www.northhinksey-pc.gov.uk
The Council is inviting competitive proposals for a new website and content management system to continue the service to the community, comply with legal requirements for Parish Councils to inform their communities and make specific information available and transparent while also improving the accessibility for visitors, flexibility for website managers and Councillors, and overall usability. The website is managed via a content management system which is operated by a Councillor elected as website manager, the Parish Clerk and Chairman.

Requirements:

- Audit of existing site, recommendations for site structure and simplifying to make key information easy to find and access.
- A flexible modular structure with strong visual elements and attractive and simple to use for visitors.
- A content management system that is intuitive and simple to use with minimal instruction (e.g. WordPress).
- Actions that need to be simple to operate by the website manager, Clerk and Chairman include:
 - adding and removing pages
 - adding and removing all types of content on pages
 - a streamlined and simple way to add and display agendas and minutes of meetings clearly. It is a legal requirement to display agenda and minutes of the monthly Council meetings and Planning meetings held more frequently, in addition we choose to post minutes of other committees so these actions happen frequently. The CMS should allow for simple ways to organise these minutes, add in dates from a calendar and be clear for users
 - archive older content and pages
 - allow for preview of pages before posting
- Transfer of content and URL to new site.
- Hosting
- Maintenance on an hourly rate
- CMS to allow for levels of administration which are managed by the Council web manager
- Email addresses based on the website (we have this now for the existing site:

Additional requests:

- Integration of social media – e.g. newsfeed display from Facebook (www.facebook.com/northhinkseypc/)
- Options to generate content from website to Facebook or vice versa
- Option to generate e-newsletters from site content
- Option to include polls and surveys