

Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting held virtually (online) via Zoom on Tuesday 15th September 2020 at 7.30pm

A video-recording of this meeting has been posted on Bruton Town Council's Youtube channel and can be seen by clicking on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_ua9WSg844

Present: Councillors Anderton, Crawford, Hood, Jones and Skinner

In the Chair: Councillor Anderton

In attendance: The Clerk, the Assistant Clerk

Before opening the meeting the Chairman explained that what had previously been called the Communications Committee has been rebranded as the Community Engagement Committee to reflect its amended Terms of Reference and expanded scope and remit (see item 4, below).

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Anderton declared a personal interest in item 9 in that his wife is considering applying for the role of Community Development Officer.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brownlow.

Councillor Hood expressed regret that if the meeting were to continue beyond 8.30pm he would have to leave for another appointment.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 12th August

It was RESOLVED 5-0-0 [for-against-abstain] that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th August 2020 be adopted as a true and accurate record.

4. Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee noted that the Committee's amended Terms of Reference had been approved by the Full Council at a meeting on 23rd August 2020.

The amended Terms of Reference are set out below.

5. Consultation methods

Members noted that the Committee would need to deploy a wide range of different methods and techniques to engage with all sectors of the local community in a variety of different contexts. Various forms of electronic media including Facebook and online surveys are a cheap, quick and highly effective way of communicating with many residents who use such media in their daily lives, and similarly many residents read *The Dove*, but other ways of reaching other residents need to be considered. Likewise there is a cost (in time or money or both) to every method of consultation so the means need to be proportionate to the ends.

Action point: The Assistant Clerk will draw up a list of consultation methods whose application will be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

6. Working with other towns and parishes

Members noted with approval that the Chairman, Councillors and the Town Clerk had been involved in informal discussions with Councillors and Officers of nearby towns (including Castle Cary, Wincanton and Frome) and neighbouring parishes. It was agreed that the current review of Local Government (see item 7, below) makes this a particularly opportune moment to strengthen such links which might help shape the agenda of Local Government reorganisation in a way that would benefit local communities.

Action point: The Council Chairman and Vice Chairman will draft a document setting out how the Council might engage with nearby towns and parishes, to be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

7. Local Government Review

Individual members had considered the alternative *One Somerset* and *Stronger Somerset* proposals submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by (respectively) Somerset County Council and the county's four District Councils including South Somerset District Council (SSDC). Given the length and complexity of the documents and the unlikelihood that the Secretary of State would attend to the voice of Bruton Town Council it was agreed that the town's interests would be best served by representations made by the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Whichever proposal prevails, Bruton's main concern is to maximise the influence of Town and Parish Councils so it would be politic to maintain good relations with the proponents of both schemes.

8. Volunteering

Members felt that the Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted strengths and weaknesses in the use of volunteers in Bruton. They discussed the relative advantages of a systematic, bureaucratic approach to volunteer management and a more informal, personal approach and agreed that both have their place.

At this point Councillor Hood had to leave the meeting

It was suggested that Bruton businesses and the Chamber of Commerce might be asked to support volunteers working to make the town more attractive to visitors. Members agreed to defer further discussion of the role and management of volunteers until a Community Development Officer has been appointed (see item 9, below) since this would be an important part of the role.

9. Recruitment of Community Development Officer

The position has been advertised online through the good offices of SALC and SSDC and on Facebook, as well as at the Community Office and on the noticeboard, and an advertisement will appear in the October issue of *The Dove*. So far only one person has asked for an application form but the application deadline is over three weeks away, on 9th October. It was felt that the salary offered was more likely to attract an enthusiastic local resident than a local government professional.

Action point: It was agreed that if a need to generate more local interest is still apparent in early October the Council could run a local Facebook advertising campaign, at a likely cost of £50-£100.

10. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is likely to be in the second half of October.

Patrick Pender-Cudlip
Assistant Clerk