

Please ask for: Sarah Richards  
Our ref: EX 09.10.19  
Date: 03 October 2019

## NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Members of the Public and Press,

You are cordially invited to attend a meeting of the **Executive Committee** to be held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019** at **7.15pm** to consider the business detailed below.



Town Clerk

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# AGENDA

1. **Apologies**  
To receive and consider apologies for absence.
2. **Nomination of Substitute Representatives**  
To note nominated substitute representatives attending in place of those who have sent their apologies.
3. **Election of Vice-Chair**  
To elect a Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019-20.
4. **Declarations of Interest <sup>1</sup> and Requests for Dispensations**  
To note any declarations of members' pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary/other interests pertaining to items on the following agenda, to note any dispensations granted in respect of business to be discussed and to consider any requests for dispensations.
5. **Minutes**  
To note that the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were confirmed as a true record by Full Council (copy herewith).
6. **Public Participation**  
To consider a resolution under Standing Orders 3d to 3h to suspend the meeting to hear comments from members of the public on items to be discussed on the agenda. (*Members of the public are entitled to speak for a maximum of three minutes*).
7. **Items of URGENT business**  
To discuss any item(s) of business which the Chairman has previously been informed at least 24 hours before the meeting and decides should be considered as a matter of urgency (*Councillors are reminded that no resolutions can be made under this agenda item*).
8. **Budget**  
To consider principles for the 2020/21 budget setting process (report reference 15/1920 herewith).
9. **Communications Strategy**  
To review the Council's communications strategy (report reference 16/1920 herewith).
10. **Terms of Reference**  
To review this committee's Delegations and Terms of Reference (copy herewith).
11. **Community Infrastructure Levy Funds**  
To consider allocating Community Infrastructure Levy Funds to Roydon Parish Council in lieu of S106 funds, which must be spent by March 2020.

**12. St Mary's Churchyard War Memorial**

To consider a further contribution of £250 to cover the cost of materials to extend the railings next to St Mary's Churchyard war memorial to display the red poppies to commemorate Remembrance Day.

**13. Progress Report**

- a) To note progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council related to the Infrastructure Committee (copy details herewith).
- b) To consider key objectives for the remainder of 2019-20 and beyond (copy details herewith).

**14. Member Forum**

To consider information or issues relevant to this committee from members for brief discussion, action or inclusion on a future agenda.

**15. Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

**16. Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings)**

To consider a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Standing Orders 1c to exclude members of the public and press in order to discuss the following item, which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

**17. Executive Committee**

Staffing- to receive a report regarding staffing (report reference 17/1920 herewith).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:**

**Councillors:** S. Browne (ex-officio)  
M. Gingell  
N. Howard (Chair)  
S. Kiddie  
J. Mason  
S. Olander (ex-officio)  
D. Poulter  
J. Robertson  
E. Taylor

**FOR INFORMATION:**

Town Clerk  
Responsible Finance Officer  
Deputy Town Clerk

**Councillors:**  
D. Collins  
A. Kitchen  
Diss Express  
Diss Mercury

**NOTES**

1 - Council has a statutory legal duty under the Localism Act 2011 s2 and has adopted a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of members in order to promote high standards of conduct as required by the Act. Members' disclosable pecuniary interests are kept on a register available to view on the Council's website. Allegations about the conduct of a councillor may be made to the district council's monitoring officer. Diss Town Council has also adopted a dispensation policy.

The reports and enclosures referred to in this agenda are supplied to councillors only. They are available (unless marked confidential) for public inspection at the Council Offices during normal opening hours or on our website at [www.diss.gov.uk/your-council/our-committees/](http://www.diss.gov.uk/your-council/our-committees/) Please note that the Council Chamber is currently on the first floor of the Corn Hall. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting who will require access to the lift should contact the Deputy / Town Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.

**DISS TOWN COUNCIL****MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive Committee** held in the Council Chamber at Diss Corn Hall on **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019** at **7:15pm.**

Present: Councillors S. Browne (Vice-Chair & ex-officio)  
M. Crawford  
C. Liggett  
J. Mason  
J. Robertson  
E. Taylor  
T. Wenman (ex-officio)

In attendance: Miss S. Richards (Town Clerk)  
Miss S. French (Deputy Town Clerk)

**EX0219/01 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Gibson, Howard (Chair) & Mrs Wenman. Vice Chair Councillor Browne chaired the meeting.

**EX0219/02 NOMINATION OF SUBSTITUTE REPRESENTATIVES**

There were none.

**EX0219/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute No.	Councillors Name	Personal/ Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
EX0219/10	S. Olander	✓		The applicant of the Nunnery is known to this councillor.

**EX0219/04 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were a true record and were duly signed by the chairman.

**EX0219/05 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Councillors considered a resolution under Standing Orders 3 d., e., f., g., & h. to suspend the meeting and receive comments from members of the public on items to be discussed on the agenda. There were no members of the public in attendance.

**EX0219/06 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

It was reported that councillors are still receiving the winmail.dat message and no attachments to emails. It was noted that the Council's IT Support contractor was continuing to investigate the issue.  
**(Action: DepTC; immediately)**

**EX0219/07 PROGRESS REPORT**

It was agreed that the Council's insurer would be contacted to resolve the remaining issue reference the draft agreement for maintenance of the gardens and boardwalk. It was also agreed that a meeting to review databases in light of the General Data Protection Regulation would be a priority.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**EX0219/08 BANKING**

Councillors noted the contents of report 22/1819 regarding the migration to online banking.

**EX0219/09**

**POLICY REVIEWS**

- a) Members considered a report (23/1819 referred) regarding the review of Council policies. Various amends were suggested, and it was agreed that the policies would be reviewed to ensure they are all in the third person, the appraisal form would be included as an appendix, the appropriate line manager would be included where appropriate & that a definition and examples of Time Off In Lieu would be considered. There was also discussion around the appropriate tone of the Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy & members were advised that the policies are deemed fit for purpose from a legal standpoint. The different roles of Council / members & staff would be clarified in the foreword & timeframes should be included wherever practical. It was noted that the stages of the disciplinary process required review and that ACAS had removed the verbal warning stage. It was

RESOLVED: That the Policy Handbook be approved subject to feedback from all committee members being received by the Deputy Town Clerk & committee with amendments being made accordingly.

**(Action: Dep TC; by w/e 22.02.19)**

- b) Members noted that the Council's communications strategy will be reviewed at a future meeting.

**(Action: Clerks; by 30.04.19)**

**EX0219/10**

**NUNNERY WALL**

Members considered recommendations (report 24/1819 referred) regarding the wall that borders the Nunnery and Diss Park. There was discussion about the reduction of the height of the wall given that the plan had not been provided. It was

RESOLVED: to instruct the Council's solicitor to reply to the latest correspondence and agree the conditions as set out by the applicant subject to:

- a) Site of proposed works to wall
- b) Approval from Planning Authority for said works
- c) Provision of the previously completed planning application
- d) The applicant placing temporary heras fencing in front of the wall on the Park side as previously agreed.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**EX0219/11**

**COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME**

- a) Members received an update regarding grant applications. It was noted that a budget of £20k has been allocated for grants for the 2019-20 financial year. Given £19k has been earmarked as operational grants & approved as part of the budget setting process, the Council only has £1k remaining. Two grant applications have been received with the total request exceeding that available and forwarded to the grants panel for review and recommendation to the March meeting of Full Council. There was discussion about the best way to request reports from grant recipients to determine effectiveness of the funding as per the procedure. It was

RESOLVED: 

- i) That the grants panel of Councillors Howard, Mrs Wenman and Robertson review the applications received with recommendations to the March meeting of Full Council.
- ii) That the letter to grant recipients requesting a report to determine the effectiveness of the funding be reviewed and contact made with the recipients prior to receipt of the letter with their grant cheques.
- iii) That the Council website is updated to reflect the grant pot available.

**(Action: NH/FW/JR; Clerks; by 13.03.19 / 30.04.19)**

- b) It was noted that the grant application form would be reviewed, if necessary, based on further feedback from applicants but that it is currently fit for purpose.

**EX0219/12**

**MEMBER FORUM**

There was no information or issues relevant to this committee raised from members for brief discussion, action or inclusion on a future agenda.

**EX0219/13**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Councillors noted that the next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Councillors Mason and Olander gave their apologies in advance of the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 8.47pm.

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Chairman: Councillor Howard

**DISS TOWN COUNCIL**

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Report Number:

**15 /1920**

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2019
Authorship:	Town Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer
Subject:	Budget Setting

### Introduction

1. The preparation of an annual budget is one of the key statutory tasks undertaken by the Council.
2. The process usually starts in October with the final precept demand being sent to South Norfolk District Council by mid-January. This means that there will be several opportunities to review the budget before the 8<sup>th</sup> January meeting when Full Council approve said budget.
3. The keys stages in the budgeting process are; review of current year budget and spending; determine the cost of spending plans; assess levels of anticipated income; provide for contingencies and the need for reserves; approve the budget; set the precept.
4. The Executive committee is responsible for working with committees to develop the Council's annual budget recommendations that considers required resources to deliver key objectives, for approval by Council.
5. It is expected that the committees consider the relevant expenditure and income streams relevant to their committee to inform this process.
6. The aim of this first Executive meeting is to consider key principles, which will determine the budget setting process.
7. Please note that the Council's new Responsible Finance Officer started on 1<sup>st</sup> October and will be learning the process.

### Key Principle 1 – Earmarked Reserves

8. Earmarked Reserves (E/R) is currently separated into 48 different allocations (see Appendix). In practice, it is often the case where Council must dip into more than one pot, which has insufficient funds to cover costs.
9. Having sought advice from the Council's Internal Auditor, the Council is legally able to arrange its E/R as it wishes providing any changes are reported to Council and minuted accordingly. It is therefore recommended that the E/R list is simplified into fewer pots as per the Council's new Responsible Finance Officer's proposal (to be tabled).

### Key Principle 2 – Staffing Costs

10. Total staffing costs for the Council in 2018-19 were £301,781, which was 51% of the total budget (i.e. income & precept).

11. There is a view that Council should be considering a principle of setting a maximum staffing budget that relates to a percentage figure of the total budget. However, the following factors would make this difficult to determine:
  - a. Unknown cost of living increases
  - b. Government's proposed National Living Wage Minimum wage increases of up to £10.50 per hour within the next five years (this would apply to 8/12 members of existing staff)
  - c. Cover for potential long-term staff sickness, absence or statutory entitlements
  - d. Expected Income & Expenditure
12. It is estimated that the total staffing costs for 2019-20 is £278,470 (43% of total budget). If the Council were to utilise the additional staffing contingency fund, total staffing cost would rise to £288,470 (45% of the total budget).
13. In future years, with all existing staff at the top of their pay scales (which would occur over the next six years), staffing costs would total £288,164 (45% of total budget) or £298,164 / 46% including the staffing contingency fund. This is based on existing income and expenditure levels.
14. Research into the staffing costs of other similar sized Town Councils suggest that the range of staffing costs varies between 40 & 70% of total budget.

#### Key Principle 3 – Community Grant Scheme

15. This financial year (2019/20), the Council allocated £20k to its Community Grant Scheme. This has historically been made up of the following awards:

Diss Museum	£4k
Citizens Advice Bureau	£3k
Borderhoppa Community Bus	£1k
Corn Hall	£6.5k
Diss Youth Group	£4k
Heritage Triangle Trust	£0.5k
General Grants	£1k
Total	£20k

16. Please note that as owner of the Corn Hall, the Council allocates £11k per year to maintain the building (including insurance) and there is £6k in Earmarked Reserves.
17. In addition to the above, the Council allocates £2,500 to its two key events; Diss Carnival (£1,250) & Christmas Lights Switch-On (£1,250). The Carnival committee excelled at generating income not only to cover its costs this year but to make a significant surplus, which will be reinvested into future events.
18. Each grant recipient has been asked to complete a grant monitoring form to assess the effectiveness of the awards to inform this budgeting process. Two of the six forms have been received to date. A reminder will go out to the remaining organisations to request the information by mid-October in order to allow enough time to review the forms and a proposal put forward to the November meeting of this committee.
19. As well as the organisations to whom we currently award grants, there are many other organisations and groups in Diss doing valuable work who may benefit from the Town Council's grant scheme.

#### Key Principle 4 – Councillor Allowances

20. Councillors are currently entitled to an allowance of £143 per year. Last year only 6/13 chose to receive the award. The Town Mayor received £382 to reflect the additional workload.
21. As a good employer, the Council should be considering the efforts of its councillors as volunteers to their community.

22. It is proposed that research is undertaken to assess the councillor allowances of other similar sized Town Councils and that consideration is given towards increasing the allowance of the Council Leader and reviewing that of the Chairs also given their higher workloads.

Key principle 5 – Publicity

23. It is proposed that we achieve greater involvement from Diss residents in the budget setting process than in previous years.
24. Most of the services that the Council provides are determined by its assets, which the Council has a responsibility to maintain. Most of the powers the Council has under different acts of Parliament are discretionary, i.e. a Council may do something, rather than it must do something. There is therefore some flexibility around what services the Council provides and which additional projects it undertakes.
25. It is proposed that the public are consulted during the budgeting process to determine top priority projects to take forward. This consultation should cover a range of communications channels to reach the widest audience.

<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>	<p>1. Simplify the Earmarked Reserves list into fewer allocations (Appendix B)</p> <p>2. To appoint Chairs of Committees, the Council Leader and a councillor with finance knowledge to a Budget Action Group to work alongside the Responsible Finance Officer and Clerk to review the current year budget, determine spending plans and assess levels of anticipated income including a review of the completed grant monitoring forms and publicity plan with proposals to be presented to a future meeting.</p> <p>3. That the Responsible Finance Officer investigates the councillor allowances of other similar sized Town Councils for review at a future meeting.</p>
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## SUMMARY REPORT OF EARMARKED RESERVES 2019-20

Committee	EMR	Balance as at 1st April 2019	Less:Actual Year to date Expense	Balance	Add: Year to date receipts	Balance as at 31st August 2019	Notes
Cap	Park Improvements/General Allocation/Urgent Repair work	£ 5,193.99		£ 5,193.99		£ 5,193.99	
Cap	Van Replacement	£ 21,000.00		£ 21,000.00		£ 21,000.00	
Cap	Closed churchyard repairs	£ 20,950.00		£ 20,950.00		£ 20,950.00	
Facilities	Mere water drainage £322.66	£ 5,325.00		£ 5,325.00		£ 5,325.00	
Facilities	Corn Hall	£ 6,054.00		£ 6,054.00		£ 6,054.00	
Facilities	Boardwalk	£ 5,777.00		£ 5,777.00		£ 5,777.00	
Cap	Neighbourhood Plan	£ 11,188.48	£1,376.25	£ 9,812.23		£ 9,812.23	Neighbourhood plan manager's Time/Expenses March-April 2019 - 287.85; IT Support May 2019 Neighbourhood Plan Laptop £45.90; IT Support June, July & August; Neighbourhood Plan Laptop £137.70; NP Office Time/Expenses May-June 19 £604.80; NP Office Time/Expenses June-July 19 £300
Ex	Events	£ 1,750.00		£ 1,750.00		£ 1,750.00	
Ex	Communication Strategy	£ 1,170.53		£ 1,170.53		£ 1,170.53	
Ex	Christmas Lights switch on	£ 260.81		£ 260.81		£ 260.81	
Ex	Carnival	£ 3,671.82		£ 3,671.82		£ 3,671.82	
Ex	Training/conference expenses	£ 6,700.00		£ 6,700.00		£ 6,700.00	
Ex	Wages- General Admin/General allocation-Archiving, Cemetery Check Services, Staff Allowances	£ 18,260.00	£182.50	£ 18,077.50		£ 18,077.50	Childcare Allow (17 March - 16 April); Childcare Allowance (Apr-May19 ); Childcare Allowance (May-Jun 19)
Ex	HR Support	£ 2,000.00		£ 2,000.00		£ 2,000.00	
Ex	Event staff support (Min no. FC0717/12)	£ 635.68		£ 635.68		£ 635.68	
Ex	Legal/Financial Liabilities/VAT Advice	£ 5,000.00	-£500.00	£ 5,500.00		£ 5,500.00	PO 4943 - Amend Draft management agreement re. Mere's Mouth toilets + related correspondence £500-accrued as at 31st March 2019- Invoice yet to be received from Jackamans
Ex	By-election costs	£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00	
Facilities	Town & Park (includes Park Pavillion)	£ 4,118.00	£1,001.47	£ 3,116.53		£ 3,116.53	Bird Netting on Park Pavillion £1001.47
Facilities	Mere biodiversity Plan	£ -		£ -		£ -	
Facilities	Maintenance workshop (DYCC move)	£ 6,000.00	£1,370.69	£ 4,629.31	£ 12.50	£ 4,641.81	DYCC Car Park, Kerb & Bollards £2615(from 2018/19 budget); DYCC Bin Storage Pad £1495(from 2018/19 budget); Maintenance Restroom Electrical Equipment £294 (Faulty Kettle £12.50 credit); Workshop Heating £1064.19; DYCC Storage Container £670 (from 2018/19 budget)
Facilities	Staff Uniforms & Health & Safety	£ 2,087.00		£ 2,087.00		£ 2,087.00	
Facilities	Office Equipment	£ 2,500.00	£547.59	£ 1,952.41		£ 1,952.41	New Laptop for Deputy Town Clerk £547.59
Facilities	Maintenance Mere's Mouth (Resurfacing)	£ 7,000.00		£ 7,000.00		£ 7,000.00	
Facilities	Play Equipment	£ 5,606.00		£ 5,606.00		£ 5,606.00	
Facilities	The Entry resurfacing	£ 1,631.00		£ 1,631.00		£ 1,631.00	
Facilities	Cemetery, Cem Roads, Cem Monuments	£ 15,000.00	£16,345.00	-£ 1,345.00	£ 3,761.25	£ 2,416.25	Resurface Cemetery Footpath £14,850 ; Roundabout/Parking -Cemetery £1,495 ; Receipt of £3,761.25 from Rosedale for Cemetery improvements
Facilities	General Equipment - Workshop	£ 10,619.00		£ 10,619.00		£ 10,619.00	
Facilities	Council office Budgeted use of reserves £11000 for Boiler	£ 11,919.00		£ 11,919.00		£ 11,919.00	
Facilities	Council Office building maintenance	£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00	
Facilities	Maintenance Market	£ 10,142.67		£ 10,142.67		£ 10,142.67	
Facilities	Track maintenance	£ 12,300.00		£ 12,300.00		£ 12,300.00	
Facilities	SPG Floodlights	£ 3,500.00		£ 3,500.00		£ 3,500.00	
Facilities	SPG Pav maintenance	£ 4,000.00		£ 4,000.00		£ 4,000.00	
Facilities	SPG - Skateboard Park	£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00		£ 5,000.00	
Facilities	Tree Management	£ 12,000.00	-£60.00	£ 12,060.00		£ 12,060.00	Take down dead tree at front of the Church - Expense Accrued as at 31st March 2019 for £60-Invoice yet to be received from Anglian tree solutions
Facilities	Mere Fountain	£ 6,655.00		£ 6,655.00		£ 6,655.00	
Facilities	Cemetery Chapels	£ 15,863.00		£ 15,863.00		£ 15,863.00	
Facilities	DYCC Grant received	£ 935.29		£ 935.29		£ 935.29	
Facilities	DYCC	£ 10,583.00		£ 10,583.00		£ 10,583.00	
Facilities	Park Toilets	£ 22,978.02		£ 22,978.02		£ 22,978.02	
Facilities	Mere's Mouth Toilets	£ 11,000.00		£ 11,000.00		£ 11,000.00	
Inf	CIL Income	£ 40,073.54		£ 40,073.54		£ 40,073.54	
Inf	Grants CCTV/CCTV Budgeted use of reserves	£ 4,742.43		£ 4,742.43		£ 4,742.43	
Facilities	Bus Shelters maintenance	£ 19,051.04		£ 19,051.04		£ 19,051.04	
HTP	HTP Project - Heritage Triangle Trust	£ -		£ -		£ -	
HTP	Project Account	£ -		£ -		£ -	
HTP	HTP	£ 18,535.00		£ -		£ -	
Facilities	Streetlights	£ 5,000.00		£ -		£ -	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 393,776.30</b>	<b>£ 20,263.50</b>	<b>£ 349,977.80</b>	<b>£ 3,773.75</b>	<b>£ 353,751.55</b>	

**DISS TOWN COUNCIL**

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Report Number:

**16 /1920**

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2019
Authorship:	Town Clerk
Subject:	Communications Strategy Review

**Introduction**

1. The Council's revised Communications Strategy was reviewed by Council in June 2019.
2. It was resolved that that Councillors Howard, Poulter and Taylor together with the Clerk would review the Communications Strategy for consideration by Council at a future meeting.
3. Councillors Poulter and Taylor and the Clerk met in September to do so. The Clerk also spoke to the marketing staff to get their input into the process and what follows is a summary of the discussions and ideas.

**Website / Social Media**

4. It was agreed that significant improvements have been made in some areas of communication namely the Council's website and social media streams are kept more up to date. It was noted that documents are not always easy to access, and the Clerk confirmed that work was currently being undertaken to address this.

**Increased Public Engagement**

5. There was a discussion about the requirement for increased public engagement via councillors and the balance between the reputation of Council and the individual right of councillors.
6. The proposed strategy provides for Chairs in addition to the Council Leader to draft press releases / statements for approval by the Clerks, given their oversight of committee business, to improve response times and to help share the workload.
7. The rationale behind channelling press enquiries through the Office is to ensure that information provided reflects Council opinion, is up to date and is consistent with other materials being produced.
8. Several suggestions were made to improve engagement including:
  - a. sharing the Clerks' weekly update externally to keep the public more abreast of progress
  - b. re-introducing councillor/Clerk forums with a new format to encourage greater engagement
  - c. a Facebook 'live' session with councillors/Clerk
  - d. use meeting outcomes to form basis of press releases
  - e. 'Support your local shops' coupon scheme and ask for ideas from traders for increasing footfall
  - f. Involve young people in Council poster/sign design
  - g. Investigate whether empty shops could be converted into 'open leisure hubs' to provide something for young people as in Norwich

9. It was noted that the public perception of 'Councils' is generally low but that the Council can strive to improve the reputation of the Council through its communications.

### **Councillor Communications**

10. Elected members will be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. Where a councillor is fully conversant with the issue and reflects the Council view (unless being asked for his/her own opinion), it is right and proper that the councillor should be able to advise accordingly.
11. Depending on the issue raised, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to the Town Clerk, request an item on a relevant agenda via the Chair, investigate the matter personally with the guidance of the relevant Chair / Town Clerk.

### **Communications Strategy**

12. The revised Communications Strategy (Appendix A) and the proposed Communications Action Plan (Appendix B) have been further amended since the June meeting. A yearly Communications Planner will be produced to reflect the proposed Communications Action Plan once approved.
13. It is proposed that this Strategy is reviewed every four years in line with other Council policy reviews.

<b>Recommendation</b>
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To adopt the revised Communications Strategy and review every four years.
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# COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Reviewed at Executive Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.0 Diss Town Council has a duty and commitment to engage effectively with its residents, partners & stakeholders.
- 1.1 Effective communication both internally and externally is key to the reputation, operation and openness of the Council.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council intends to achieve this and improve its communications in the future.
- 1.3 Related documentation to this strategy includes the Council's Computer, Email & Internet policy, Freedom of Information – Publication Scheme & GDPR – Privacy Notice & the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- 1.4 Effective communication is the responsibility of everyone involved at the Town Council including members, staff and partners.
- 1.5 The Council recognises that communicating such a diverse range of services to a wide range of customers is both a necessity and a challenge.

## **2. Communication Principles**

The communication strategy should be simple, realistic and deliverable using the Council's current resources. The Council will:

- a. Ensure all communication is clear, concise, informative and factual
- b. Ensure communications are transparent, timely and focused on issues that matter to residents, partners and stakeholders
- c. Ensure communications are widely accessible
- d. Listen to and engage with the community

## **3. Our Aims & Objectives**

We want to increase our residents' awareness of and involvement in the Council and improve their perception of the value that the Council brings to our town. We will achieve this by:

- a. Ensuring the Council's responsibilities, services, priorities, objectives and challenges are communicated openly & effectively to the local community
- b. Identifying cost effective methods and systems to communicate with residents, partners & stakeholders
- c. Recognising the need for different channels of communication to engage with different audiences
- d. Promoting a positive image within the community
- e. Proactively challenging inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the brand image or integrity of the Council
- f. Engaging with local business, charities & community groups
- g. Asking our community for feedback to better understand their needs
- h. Measuring the effectiveness of our communications activities

#### **4. Existing Communications**

- 3.1 The Council currently makes use of a wide range of communication channels to target different audience profiles.
- 3.2 The Council's audiences are wide and varied but will typically include residents, Town Council staff, harder-to-reach groups including young people, the media, higher tier authorities, voluntary groups and organisations, local businesses, MPs, other public sector organisations (police, health, fire), visitors and those who work in the area.
- 3.3 Internal communications – email, phone, face-to-face meetings, meeting agendas & minutes.
- 3.4 External communications – as above plus press releases, website, social media, face to face customer service, contributions to local publications, monthly column in the local paper, a quarterly publication (Diss Matters), posters, banners, mail correspondence, Council meetings, statutory public notices, events & public consultation.

#### **5. What should we be communicating?**

Research by MORI, an independent research organisation, and the Local Government Association, suggests that the most important drivers of council reputation among local residents are:

- a. perceived quality of services overall
- b. perceived value for money
- c. media coverage
- d. direct communications
- e. Council performance
- f. a clean, green and safe environment
- g. positive experiences of contact with Council employees

#### **6. Methods**

We will deliver our objectives by using the most accessible, realistic and cost-effective formats to publicise our activities and promote our aims & values. And striving to achieve an engaged audience who anticipate communication by being consistent in where and when our messages appear. We will:

- a. Continue to develop the Council's website which is regularly updated to give timely and useful information including links to other local authorities and partner services.
- b. Create a direct mailing list for the newsletter by asking visitors to our website to register.
- c. Increase the Council's social media presence to promote our activities and local issues through the Council's Facebook, Twitter & Instagram pages
- d. Increase online accessibility to Council services
- e. Improve relations with the local media to encourage informed reporting

- f. Continue to improve Council/community produced publication, Diss Matters, which is circulated to all residents, partner services and promoted through our website's 'news' section.
- g. Provide marketing activity for events and activities that support the work of the Council e.g. what's on diary, Carnival promotion.
- h. Continue written communications on noticeboards and banners and ensure all correspondence bears our logo and the relevant disclaimers.
- i. Improve engagement with the business community & local interest groups through councillor involvement, Officer support and joint campaigns
- j. Continue to provide a face-to-face service through our staff at the offices, our public meetings and our councillors.
- k. Arrange and support local events to encourage visitors to the town, support for local traders and resident participation and engagement.
- l. Promote and advertise our services using channels that offer value for money & are timely for residents and other target audiences
- m. Encourage feedback through all our channels of communication.

## **7. Dealing with the Press & Media**

- 7.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on an issue. It is the responsibility of all Officers and members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.
- 7.2 Any Officer or Member may draft a press release / comment for approval by the Town / Deputy Clerk. This should ensure that the information is up to date, there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored. It also enables the Council to respond more quickly to media requests and / or pro-actively seek out opportunities for improved engagement.
- 7.3 The Town or Deputy Clerk, Council Leader or Town Mayor and Chairmen of committees are authorised to respond to approaches from the media provided that the statements reflect the Council's opinion and that they have been approved by the Town / Deputy Clerk before release.

## **8. Council's online presence**

- 8.1 Currently all correspondence and publications promote the Council's website and social media pages.
- 8.2 Links to our website are provided from other key partners including South Norfolk Council and the Council's social media pages 'follow' other partner organisations helping to raise the Council's profile.
- 8.3 The website links to the Council's social media pages, which currently have 856 followers (Facebook), 1,173 followers (Twitter) and 628 followers (Instagram).
- 8.4 The Council's website has a large 'What's On' database and information about events and activities are regularly posted on its social media pages.

## **9. Effective Public Consultation**

- 9.1 Most of the Council's consultation is by way of occasional questionnaires on specific subjects and member / staff interaction with the public.

9.2 More needs to be done to engage the community in Council activity and consideration will be given to encouraging more members of the public to attend Council meetings to have their say, making the latest updates on Council activity readily accessible online & formulating a pool of Council 'friends' who can support the Council in its decision making and activities.

9.3 All communication with the public on Council related matters must reflect the decisions and policies of the Council.

## 10. Action Plan

This strategy has been translated into a proposed action plan (Appendix B) from which a Yearly Communications Planner will be produced to ensure the targets are met.

## 11. Evaluation

11.1 It is important that the Council measures the success of this strategy so that it may inform any future plan.

11.2 The following measures will be used:

- a. Number of website hits, click throughs and bounce backs
- b. Analysis of our social media interactions
- c. Positive media coverage
- d. Inbound enquiries to our offices recorded via our enquiries log
- e. Facility hire volumes
- f. Attendance at public meetings & events
- g. Number of candidates standing at elections
- h. Response rates to surveys & consultations
- i. Engagement with Diss Matters publication – circulation / response to competitions / input from partner organisations / likes, shares & polls on social media / website hits
- j. Feedback from the public

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At a meeting of Diss Town Council, held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the aforementioned strategy was approved.

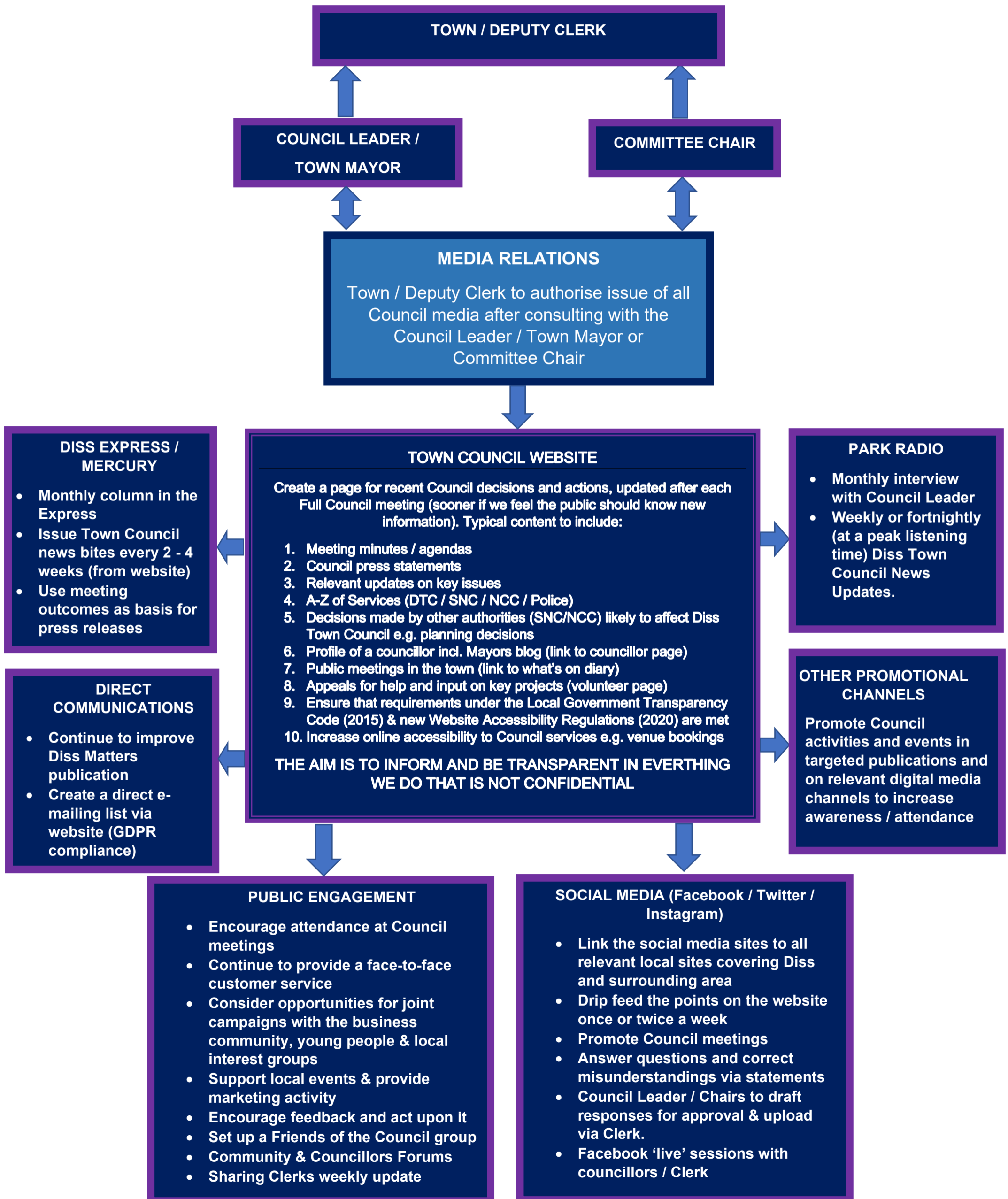
Clerk of the council.....

Date.....

Date of next review .....



**Appendix B - PROPOSED DISS TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN (External)**





## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DELEGATIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Committees may exercise delegated functions on behalf of the Town Council under the following terms of reference, subject to: -
  - a) the Town Council's approved budget and Financial Regulations;
  - b) any previous minuted decision of the Town Council;
  - c) Any matters reserved to the Town Council by law.
2. The Chair of this committee will be the nominated representative from Council to attend meetings, along with the Clerk wherever possible, on issues relevant to their committee. In their absence, the Chair will nominate a substitute representative from their committee.
3. The Chair should be involved with matters pertaining to their committee. For activity that crosses more than one committee, the relevant Chairs should be involved to maximise synergies and realisation of objectives.
4. The Chair will work with the Clerks to produce meeting agendas, reports and minutes and draft press releases/statements.

### Terms of Reference

To ensure the efficient, proficient and cost-effective running of the Council; increase net income; develop a budget for approval by Full Council; ensure the Council complies with all relevant laws; follow best practice in the management of the Council's finances, ensure appropriate accountability and transparency; oversee recruitment, appointment, remuneration and management of all staff and ensure the Council adheres to data protection regulations. It is also responsible for all aspects of communication and engagement with the community.

Membership: 6 minimum

Quorum: 3

Frequency of Meetings: quarterly

1. To elect a committee Chair & Vice Chair (only members of each committee have voting rights)
2. To review and/or identify committee objectives for recommendation to Council & report progress
3. To work with committees to develop the Council's annual budget that considers required resources to deliver key objectives, for approval by Council
4. To simplify administrative and financial procedures to increase staff resources available to deliver the Council's priorities
5. To increase net income through revenue generation opportunities and identifying cost efficiencies

6. To be responsible for allocating and controlling the financial resources of the Council including carrying out a quarterly financial review
7. To annually review the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and make recommendations to Council
8. To annually review internal control procedures including risk management, insurance, appointment of the Internal Auditor and make recommendations to Council
9. To be responsible for the Council's Capital Management Plan and financial planning
10. To annually review the Council's asset register
11. To be responsible for the collection of all revenue, the raising and renewal of loans (for recommendation to Council)
12. To make recommendations for the banking, financial and accounting methods for adoption by the Council
13. To review hire charges and burial fees
14. To ensure the Council complies with all legislative requirements
15. To review all policies
16. To oversee and review agency agreements (including entering into legal proceedings on the Council's behalf where necessary)
17. To ensure the proper management of contractors and volunteers
18. To review the Community Grant Scheme and consider applications
19. To determine the Council's staffing structure
20. To approve staff job descriptions
21. To ensure the recruitment, appointment, induction, training, remuneration and management of all staff is carried out with due diligence and in compliance with all relevant legislation, good practice and nationally agreed terms and conditions of service
22. To develop a performance management programme that links the strategy plan to staff development and performance against specific targets
23. To develop and monitor an effective induction and training programme for all councillors
24. To develop a communications strategy setting out how the Council will engage with the community
25. To oversee the development of the Council's website, publications, use of social media and any other forms of engagement considered appropriate
26. To support the local economy
27. To set up Action Groups as required.

*Reviewed at the Executive committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019.*

Item 13a

Minute Reference	Item	Action	Assigned to	Timescale (By)	Comments or further action
F0918/07	<b>BUSKING</b>	d) That the Action Group would review the guide to busking dealing with issue resolution and work with traders to fine tune the Code of Conduct.	SB		SNC is keen to discuss moving this forward & an Officer will be in touch. No update
EX0318/08	<b>TOWN MAYOR'S PROTOCOL</b>	c) Councillor Wenman and the Clerk will prepare a Town Mayor's Protocol prior to the Annual Meeting of the Town Council	Clerk/SB	2018-19	TC discussed with Town Mayor
EX0318/10	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	A report will be provided to all future meetings of this committee updating on the HR matters as follows: a) Leavers – receiving reports of exit interviews from both staff and councillors; b) New starters – to receive results of probationary assessments c) Time Off In Lieu - status against policy d) Appraisal schedule / Salary scale increases approved e) Report on implementation of HR policies to deal with issues including disciplinary, grievance, sickness and absence f) Recorded accidents at work g) Occupational health issues h) Status of volunteers/self-employed contractors	Clerk	Every meeting	b) New RFO starts 1st October - probationary assessments scheduled in for months 2 & 6 as per appraisal policy - see confidential staffing report for agenda?
EX0918/08	<b>BANKING</b>	iii) To request a Barclaycard Flex credit card facility b) Review of Council investment options	RFO	end of March 2019	To be reviewed by new RFO.
EX1118/10	<b>COUNCIL'S RESILIENCE PLAN</b>	Draft Resilience Plan to be presented to committee in the New Year	JR / Clerk	by 03.01.19	JR to meet with contact to progress.
EX1218/16	<b>IT SUPPORT</b>	To review S2 Computers Ltd service provision after one year contract	DepTC	01/12/19	
EX0219/07	<b>GDPR</b>	To schedule a meeting to review databases in light of the General Data Protection Regulation.	Clerk	immediately	Update to be provided to meeting.
EX0219/11	<b>COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME</b>	ii) To review the letter to grant recipients requesting a report to determine the effectiveness of the funding. To contact the recipients prior to receipt of the letter with their grant cheques.	NH/FW/JR/ Clerks	by 13.03.19/ 30.04.19	Monitoring forms have been sent. Two completed forms received. Require all forms by mid October to inform budgeting process
FC0619/14	<b>COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY</b>	That Councillors Howard, Poulter and Taylor together with the Clerk would review the Communications Strategy for consideration by Council at a future meeting.	Clerk	by 05.07.19	On agenda
FC0719/09	<b>STAFFING</b>	a) To agree to advertise the RFO post for 25 hrs and to amend points 13, 15 and 17 from desirable to essential.	DepTC	immediately	Done
		b) To adopt the New Mourning Protocol with the Mayor, Council Leader and one available Committee Chair nominated for the Chain of Command.	Dep TC	Immediately	Done. Awaiting quote for works required to safely raise and lower flag at Corn Hall

Please note that the deadline / review dates and progress columns have not been updated since this document was last reviewed. Former councillors/staff references have been removed.

COM	REF	Total actions per staff / councillor		ACTIONS	Total	Clerk 4	MM 0	RFO 2	NH 1	AK 0	JM 0	SO 2	SNC 0	NCC 0	Others 1	PRIORITY	DEADLINE/REVIEW	PROGRESS	
		OBJECTIVE																	
EX	1	Data Collection		Review the necessity and effectiveness of daily data collection and reporting currently undertaken and simplify/cease if deemed appropriate	3	1	1				1					H	Jun-17	Actions will be assessed & prioritised as part of the Strategy Plan review with proposals to the April Full Council.	
EX	2	Filing & Storage		To review filing, storage and archive systems to simplify and streamline	0											M	Jun-17	Move to One Drive should improve electronic storage with work to simplify folder system. Some work has taken place to improve filing of Finance docs. Ian Elliott met with admin team to discuss Microsoft Office 2016. Potential reporting system to suit Council needs to be investigated.	
EX	3	Banking Arrangements		Review the Council's banking arrangements and internal controls in order to pay invoices and wages electronically	1			1								H	Nov-16	RFO & Clerk working to move main current accounts to Unity Trust Bank. Priority for the RFO once Internal Controls reviewed & Clerk returns from leave.	
EX	4	New Revenue Streams		To increase net income by 10% on previous year	1			1								M	Mar-17	Meeting being scheduled for February to continue discussions	
EX	5	Quantify cost efficiencies		Identify and quantify cost efficiencies	1		1									M	Mar-17	As above.	
EX	6	Review Council Activities (HF1.1)		Review all Council activities to determine who it is delivered for, how much it costs, and if still relevant, to identify relevant opportunities for alternative delivery mechanisms	1		1									M	Jun-17	Action not yet started will be assessed & prioritised as part of the Strategy Plan review with proposals to the April Full Council.	
EX	7	Draft Budget (incl. Review)		1. Identify key risks (ie loss of SNC grant/asset deterioration) 2. Develop facilities management programme 3. Identify cost savings 4. Identify new income streams 5. Draft budget 6. Approved by Council	2			1		1						H	Oct-16	Budget for 2017-18 approved at Jan FC. Work on FMP & identifying cost savings and income streams will assist with next budgeting round.	
EX	8	Review Earmarked reserves			2			1		1						H	Nov-16	Linked to 3.1	
EX	9	Review Internal Controls		To review the effectiveness of internal controls	2			1		1						H	Annually	Last reviewed in March 2018. Scheduled for review from January 2019	
EX	10	Policy Reviews		Review all relevant policies	1					1						L	Annually	All policies have been reviewed and are now being checked by the Clerk before review by committee / Full Council	
EX	11	Performance management			1	1										M	Mar-17		
EX	12	Councillor Training		To circulate councillor training opportunities and evaluate training opportunities for all councillors by the start of the next financial year 2018/19	2					1	1					M	Annually+	Personal Safety training dates proposed for Feb did not suit all councillors. Proposed to draft an annual training plan for councillors in order that all training needs can be identified & prioritised.	
EX	13	Support Community/Businesses		To support the local economy through a variety of measures including promotion, cleanliness, partnership initiatives, planning responses, seasonal enhancements (Christmas Lights, bunting).	2	1										1	2	Winter 17	Quote expected from P&K for lights display incl extension end of May - to be considered by DSAC in June. Bunting should be up around the town centre from Sunday 28th May! N.B. Blachere Illuminations keen to discuss requirements. Cozens Ltd also potential (installed Long Stratton's trees)
EX	14	Communications Strategy		To develop a communications strategy setting out how DTC will engage and communicate with the community	1	1												Jan-18	Scheduled for Jan 18 currently
EX	15	Digital Communications		Maintain website & social media streams with upcoming events, news & reviewing periodically	1	1										OP	Jun-17		
EX	16	Councillor Surgeries		To set up Councillor surgeries to be held in a neutral location	5	1			1	1	1	1					4	May-18	
EX	17	Review Grant Scheme			0											OP	Jun-17		

		Total actions per staff / councillor																
COM	REF	OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	Total	Clerk 4	MM10	RFO2	NH1	AK0	JM0	SO2	SNC0	NCC0	Others 1	PRIORITY	DEADLINE/REVIEW	PROGRESS	
EX	18	Community Network	To facilitate a Diss Community Network linking community groups undertaking similar activities to encourage collaborative working and avoid duplication of effort through: 1. Identify relevant community groups 2. Identify relevant audiences/activities to determine commonalities 3. Consider how this links with work Julia Fairbrother is doing ref youth groups 4. Invite groups to initial networking session to share knowledge & encourage collaborative working 5. Gather feedback & arrange series of sessions if deemed effective 6. Consider how this is fed back to this committee /good practice shared & initiative promoted	4	1										3	4	May-19	Scheduled for May 19 currently
EX	19	Representation on outside bodies	Consider the principles and issues of the appointment of councillors as representatives to outside bodies	1						1						OP		
EX	20	Improve Council Publications		1	1											OP	Jun-17	
EX	21	Increase Engagement at Events	Have a presence at events and market days with a pop up shelter and promotional material to answer questions and provide a direct face to face opportunity to engage with the community. Design and purchase DTC liveried gazebo and promotional material reflecting the Council's key priorities.	0												OP	Jun-17	Clerk & Councillor Forum postponed as not deemed as best use of time. Alternative mechanisms for community engagement to be explored as part of comms strategy review & action plan
EX	22	Youth Council	Work with local youth organisations and schools to set up a Youth Council to engage with young people and give them a voice in the local community	5	1			1		1					2	3	Jun-17	Youth Council launched in September. Currently has 7/8 members