

Review of Communications and Customer Contact – Terms of Reference

Introduction

Belper is a place which is renowned for its innovation and invention; its place in the forefront of the Industrial Revolution is well known, and its reinvention as a welcoming Town out of the ashes of Industrial decline indicative of a place which does not wait for change to happen.

The Council as community leader has a responsibility to utilise social and technological change in a positive way and to support the community through its phases ensuring that no one gets left behind. Communication is an essential part of an efficient, modern, forward thinking Council and it needs to respond to a number of drivers which impact on the pace of change, and for Belper these include the following :

Technology – The increasing use of “The Internet of things” is impacting every aspect of our lives. The Council needs to keep pace with these changes to ensure that it can reach all sections of the community as well as businesses and other stakeholders. “Digital by Default” is becoming the norm.

Climate Change – The need to use less of the world’s precious physical resources and pollutants such as paper, fossil fuels etc and be at the forefront of modelling new approaches to communication and customer contact which minimise our carbon footprint and impact on the environment.

Finance – The impact of COVID 19 is likely to have far reaching impacts on the resources available to the public sector to deliver services. With that in mind greater efficiency in the way in which services are delivered is paramount and it is well known that some customer access channels are more expensive than others.

Accessibility – The Council has made some specific commitments in the area of accessibility and this includes how Council services and facilities are accessed and where improvements need to be made in order to fulfil those commitments

Context and Limitations

The Council does not provide the broad range of services in the same way as a District or Upper tier Council does and day to day contact with the public is far less. Therefore, it might be argued that the drivers highlighted above have less impact at Town and Parish Council level and that only modest change, if any, is required.

However, the Council’s reputation will not be enhanced if it is seen to be out of touch, or communicates in ways which people no longer use e.g. the decline of the printed newspaper. Furthermore, the public have a right to expect the Council to be approachable to all sections of the community and to deliver services and information efficiently in a carbon friendly way. Finally, with structural change being discussed across Local Government is not inconceivable that Town Councils could be expected to play a more enhanced role in the future so a modern contact and communications infrastructure is a good investment.

Scope of the Review

The following areas are within the scope of the review :

Council Office Accommodation	
Applicable Drivers :	
Accessibility –	The offices are in a fairly remote location and are not easily accessible for persons with a Disability
Climate Change	- The accommodation is not energy efficient and the Council spends a relatively large sum on heating and lighting. It is not close to public transport access which potentially means more use of the car
Finance	- As above with regard to the costs of maintaining the building when more suitable accommodation or approach might be available
Technology	- Most of the work of the Council does not require an office building; technology allows day to day work and meetings to take place electronically whilst the outdoor work only requires a base for tools equipment etc
<p>Key Questions :</p> <p>Are there physical locations which resolve the issues connected with the Drivers outlined above ?</p> <p>Can the Council operate without having a physical office at all ?</p> <p>Would a shared presence with another public service provider provide a better service to the public and are there any opportunities?</p> <p>Does analysis of face to face contacts at the offices reveal any issues which can be resolved over the telephone or online ?</p> <p>Does the limited opening hours justify there being a public enquiry area and is face to face contact actually needed ? (Opening hours 9.30am – 12.30pm Monday to Friday)</p> <p>Does the Council need to have a fixed meeting space post COVID ? Are there venues around the Town where the Council can “go to the people” to hold meetings ?</p>	

Could savings made by not having an office be reinvested in better access arrangements using new technology ? E.G. Self service points in Libraries, Leisure Centres etc

Can online meetings become the norm so as to reduce the use of the car and the corresponding carbon footprint and the need for physical locations for meetings ?

What tools exist which would support a more digital by default approach eg:

- The use of VOIP service for telephone calls
- Presence information on laptops and telephones
- Collaboration of desktop diaries
- More effective use of collaboration tools such as "Teams"
- Training on the above

Council Leaflets / Notices etc	
Applicable Drivers :	
Accessibility	- The Council does not currently produce Braille / Talking Book or Dyslexia friendly publications etc
Technology	- The vast majority of information produced by the Council can be produced in digital format which impacts on the extent to which the more traditional (and more expensive) methods are used in future
Climate Change	- Digital formats are wholly Carbon Neutral whereas the production and delivery of printed materials carries a carbon footprint which is not desirable
Finance	- Digital communications are much cheaper than paper and other materials and there are a range of digital tools such as website , social media, e mails, QR codes, Aps etc which can be used as alternatives
Key Questions	
How many paper documents does the Council produce and what alternative delivery methods are available to replace them ?	
How IT literate are the communities in Belper and how extensive is digital access amongst the population ?	
Is the IT infrastructure in the Town i.e. Internet Bandwidth , mobile phone coverage capable of supporting a Digital by Default approach ?	
What digital tools are available to support the Council's messaging and are there improvements which can be made as a result of this ? Examples include :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video screens in public places eg Libraries / Station / Supermarkets etc - Aps to provide specific subject matter information eg transport and visitor info - Digital alerts to be sent straight to a resident's "in box " 	
How extensively are physical notice boards used ? Are there digital alternatives ?	
Do forms and applications have to be in paper format ? Can we introduce exclusively on line processes ?	

How far would local Community Groups support a Digital by Default approach ?

Not in Scope

- The work and location of the outdoor team as the vast majority of their work is of a physical nature and their customer contacts are naturally face to face
- The Council website and social media which is being reviewed separately. However, there needs to be feedback in to the website and social media review in order that opportunities identified in this review can be fed in to future functionality requirements
- Day to day face to face contact between Councillors and the community who may be invited to community group meetings or to inspect locations
- Established physical events such as markets , festivals and fayres all of which have their intrinsic value to encourage social interaction, improve mental health and reduce social isolation

How will the Review be carried out

It is envisaged that the review will be carried out by a Member working group such as the Communications group, or by a separate group constituted by the Council.

The Council may wish to co opt or invite persons from outside of the Council with appropriate knowledge and experience to be part of the working group.

The process of the review will include the following steps :

APPENDIX 1

- Examination of the questions and the identification of changes / additions to the list in order to ensure a comprehensive approach is applied
- Use of the questions to develop agendas for a programme of meetings which will allow time to assemble required and relevant background information to help inform discussions and identify conclusions
- The use of case studies to highlight areas of good practice
- Work on identifying options for the future approach including, where required, a roadmap which identifies the relevant milestones and target dates for delivering changes
- A final report for presentation to the Council