

NAILSWORTH TOWN COUNCIL  
**COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**  
 Minutes of a meeting held on 12 October 2011

Present	Cllr J L Duckworth (chairman) Cllr Mrs A Elliott Cllr M J Kelly Cllr S Robinson * Cllr Mrs S E Thorpe
non attendance	Cllr N I Kay
*	denotes absence from part of the meeting

**Committee Terms of Reference / Policy**

Cllr Duckworth had downloaded an **example document** from the web, which was reviewed and altered to suit the purposes of this committee.

**Under point 3.4. keeping of records** - it was confirmed that all council records and minutes were kept by the Clerk and older records/information were stored in Gloucester Record Office.

A major aim of the committee was to **raise the profile of the town** and to **counteract inaccurate and aggressive gossip** on unofficial anonymous chat sites. Journalists contacted the mayor or chairmen of committees for information on specific issues, and Cllrs were aware that any comments made were in a private capacity unless they had obtained prior authority from council to speak on behalf of NTC.

Cllr Kelly asked that an **accessibility clause** be added to the policy.

**3.2. coordination with Nailsworth News** - the Mayor's column worked well to impart topical messages from NTC, and the NN editor was generally very helpful in fitting in other items as requested. Members should not forget that NN was an independent publication.

**3.2. management of notice boards** - There were currently notice boards in the TH, TIC, Library, Shortwood Green, (the one at Nortonwood had disappeared). Cllr Mrs Thorpe thought there should be more, but preventing vandalism and responsibility for regular updating were touched on; the matter would require further discussion.

Cllr Duckworth undertook to produce a **revised draft policy** on the basis of these discussions and would circulate it for the next meeting of the committee, and prior to seeking approval from full council.

NB. Future circulation of **the Directory** (previously as part of the Fountain once a year) and **Town Guide** needed to be considered. There was always the option of a one off door-to-door distribution via the post office which was the method used for distribution of the council's erstwhile Fountain magazine, and cost £500 (2010 price) for the 2800 copies required for circulation to Nailsworth and Horsley (being the GL6 0 sector – the PO will only provide this service to a whole post code sector)

### Website and emails

Cllr Duckworth recommended that the **domain name** be changed to **gov.uk**, which was only available to organisations that were bona fide government sites, and would make the TC's site more official/professional. If the site name was changed, a divert could be applied to the **co.uk** site so that hits were redirected. The site address could then be corrected gradually over time as documentation was updated. The accreditation that .gov domain names carry means a greater cost which would be £108 for two years, £68 for the next two years, then back to £108 for the following two. The Clerk was unsure of the cost of the current domain name which was managed by Bruce Burn.

Cllr Duckworth also recommended that the new site be a "**content management system**" which would mean that pages could instantly be updated without the delay of referring back to the website designer each time. The updates were simply made and immediate so that the site could be permanently accurate. Changes could be made at will to design, presentation, content, or not as the case might be, but having such a site would at least allow for the option.

It was also suggested that Cllrs should have council **gov.uk email addresses** separate to their own private emails. It would be necessary to be able to remove and add these easily as Cllrs came and went.

The Clerk pointed out that Mr Burn also acted as **technician** to sort out computer problems in the office and his brief was to post up what was passed on to him. He had also set up and managed the Archive Office and Arkell CC websites.

Discussion ensued as to how interactive the website needed to be, and who would be responsible for running the content management system. It seemed logical to channel information through one operative to maintain continuity and avoid anarchy. The operative would need to be aware of council business and chase up news for inclusion on council projects, council activities, and from bodies outside council control; eg. to promote town events such as Christkindl evening. Mrs de Lacroix offered to manage the content initially, as she felt she had sufficient internal knowledge, and it was in a way a continuation of her management of the former Fountain magazine. Ultimately, the job could be taken on possibly by the soon to be appointed Assistant to the Clerk, but this person would need to have the relevant computer skills and knowledge of council business and the task would need to be allowed for within their working hours.

Other suggestions for a later date were an '**ask the Mayor**' **blog page**, which Cllr Duckworth felt would do much to counteract scurrilous informal sites. This would have to make clear that only specific questions would be answered. It was questioned whether this task should be imposed on the office of Mayor which already carried a heavy work load. Perhaps "**ask the Council**" would be better and then the task could be taken on by any willing councillor volunteer.

Cllr Mrs Thorpe questioned how much time Cllrs could give to this, and how important a communication was the website given that residents who had a genuine question could always contact the Clerk and be referred on to the appropriate cllr or write a letter to put before council.

It was not necessary to be too ambitious at this stage, and how Cllrs wished to develop the site could be built up over time. As long as the site was able to be content managed, it gave the option to do so. The Clerk was concerned that Mr Burn should be informed of these proposals and involved at an early stage in assisting with the changes being proposed. Mr Burn had managed the web site most competently but times had moved on and technology had advanced so that it was much easier to self-manage, and all agreed that the site was no longer adequate to the task.

**RESOLVED** it was agreed in principle to

- a) **Change the domain name for the town website to a gov.uk.**
- b) **Issue gov.uk email addresses for Cllrs.**
- c) **Cllr Duckworth would talk with Bruce Burn to discuss the best way forward.**

Cllr Duckworth offered to **host the domain name** as part of his own business package at no additional cost. The offer was greatly appreciated, but members were concerned about what would happen if Cllr Duckworth left the council, or closed his business. It was presumed that the current site was hosted by Mr Burn in much this way and any arrangement was subject to change. Cllr Duckworth offered to investigate the best way of proceeding and find out the cost of a single site hosting to be held directly by NTC.

Cllr Duckworth confirmed that the content management system passed all accessibility tests, which would cover Cllr Kelly's requirements.

The site could provide **statistics**, so that different pages could be monitored for popularity and amended accordingly

Cllr Mrs Thorpe thought that clarification on the **purpose of the website** was needed eg what documents was NTC obliged to publish? NTC would need to take account of new government requirements. There was already £2k in this year's budget for updating the website and it was agreed to add a sum for next year, to cover cost of the site controller, domain fees etc.

### **Budget wish list**

£1000

Cllr Duckworth was keen that **draft council minutes** be posted up for speed of information, and which could be later replaced with the approved minutes. The Clerk and some members were concerned about the possible publication of inaccuracies in draft minutes, and there had been cases where a resident had taken action on the basis of draft minutes, which were then corrected which had led to litigation against the council concerned. The Clerk advised that once Council minutes had been approved, they could not be amended, and she was very unhappy at the idea of publishing drafts.

Although it was accepted that members of the press attending a council meeting could report as they saw fit, and attending residents could pass on information as well, it was not the same as the council itself putting facts down in writing, and once information was published, it would be difficult to supersede it in the public's mind with a corrected version. The draft minutes were

also not necessarily immediately available. Cllr Duckworth advised that many other councils published draft minutes and he would investigate how this was done and any changes in policy. However, NTC was perfectly within its rights to make its own decision on the matter.

Cllr Mrs Thorpe added that it was time for NTC to revise its town plan and the website could be used for **public consultation** as part of this process. It was accepted that the website only provided one vehicle for consultation, and all other methods of communication would need to be covered as well.

It was agreed to call another meeting when there was more to report, and Cllr Duckworth would circulate the results of his investigations in the meantime.

.....  
Chairman

.....  
Date