

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors R Arthur, Mrs J A Bell,
Mrs M R Baird, Mrs G Bleasdale,
B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, Mrs S Forster,
C Snowball, B Taylor, K Younger.

Apologies: Councillor Mrs H J Cahill, S Cudlip,
Miss S Morrison, I Paul,

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Henk Geertsema, Internal Communications Manager at Durham County Council to update Members on how Durham County Council deal with publicity, marketing and public relations.

Mr Geertsema discussed the main channels for communications. These consisted of Durham County News which is a community newspaper which is circulated to 232,000 households which has a greater reach than any local newspaper. The Durham County News is circulated 4 times per year and contributions are accepted from across the County.

Durham County Council also has a website which has between 3-5 million page views per year. This was a good investment by the Council and the Council are trying to encourage residents to interact and transact with the Council via the website as this gives greater efficiency to both the residents and the Council.

Mr Geertsema also stated that Durham County Council still provide leaflets and posters for residents who do not use digital media. Also the Council have recently launched an App for people who use smartphones. This is basically a miniature website with great functionality which is being piloted by Durham University Students and is cost neutral.

Mr Geertsema also stated that Durham County Council use eNewsletters which are subscriber based. It is far more cost effective to have a programme disseminated via email rather than the Gala Theatre have programmes printed out. Mr Geertsema also

mentioned that the Council communicates via direct mail with their partners. This may entail information from GP's, Town and Parish Councils and Durham Community Association.

Durham County Council also have a Facebook page which currently has 20,000 likes which means people who follow the Council on Facebook. Facebook is an easy way to inform residents of anything that is current in the City for example road traffic works or accidents it is an immediate notification. The Council also has a Twitter account with 18,000+ followers and LinkedIn which has 4,600 followers. The Council also launched Instagram last year which is mainly targeted towards younger people. In addition to these social media channels the Council also has 70+ specialist social media micro-sites especially for action partnerships.

Internal communications include the use of the Council's intranet site which is a webpage solely for the use of Durham County Council staff. Information is relayed on the intranet prior to any press releases so staff are informed before the general public. The Council widely uses email for instant communication.

Campaigns are visually driven there are 27 slides on the website showing the refurbishment of Seaham's North Pier.

Mr Geertsema stated it was important to have as many channels of communication as possible to get the message out to residents. Often this can be seen as duplication by using media such as Facebook, Twitter and the website but by using as many forms of media as possible will ensure that more people will get to see the message being relayed as not all people use the same forms of social media.

At this point Members were invited to ask any questions and the following comments were made:

- (i) A Member questioned about the Volunteers with regards to domestic violence do they just take on anyone who applies?

Mr Geertsema said that they are asked to volunteer an interest then they are given training. It is mostly a volunteer signposting role as there are services in place which deal with domestic violence. Durham County Council work closely with the Local Safeguarding Board and they are working with local taxi drivers to assist with signposting. It is very important for anyone who wants to work in this area has sufficient training as it can be quite distressing.

- (i) A Member asked about the press release strategy for the Durham County News so that Seaham Town Council can share dates of events. Is there a timescale for getting these articles to Durham County Council that can be shared with Seaham Town Council so deadlines are met? Currently it feels that the Durham County News is Durham centric.

Mr Geertsema stated that he tries to get away from Durham County News being Durham centric as well as being Durham County Hall based. It is important that the surrounding County Durham areas such as Seaham are included in the Durham County News.

The Member went on to say that it is important for the Town Clerk to have the dates so articles can be placed which are still relevant at the time.

Mr Geertsema replied that he could furnish the Town Clerk with a list of deadline dates as well as the Editor's information so that Seaham Town Council have a direct line to the Editor.

- (iii) A Member asked Mr Geertsema if he could give Seaham Town Council which is a relatively small organisation any assistance on how to develop strategies on communication and how you would measure its effectiveness?

Mr Geertsema stated that he has found the best way to engage people is to ask them questions. If you ask people 'what do you think about' you can engage people on so many different levels and the amount of people you engage is ultimately an indicator of how well you are doing as a Town Council because those are the number of people who are likely to come to your event.

- (iv) A Member stated that Mr Geertsema stated they receive donations for the magazine can you tell us what the approximate cost is for the County to publish the magazine?

Mr Geertsema stated that it is approximately .08 pence per copy which includes delivery. There is a good contract in place with a distributor who does this for Durham County Council.

A Member stated that one of the problems Seaham faces is that the town is an A19 corridor for visitors. A lot of people visit from Sunderland, South Shields, Hartlepool and Stockton. What we want is people coming in from Bishop Auckland, Stanley, Crook and Willington. Some people don't even realise that Seaham is in County Durham.

The Chair thanked Mr Geertsema for attending the meeting and wished him well in his new role.

Mr Geertsema left the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON, 21ST JUNE, 2016

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated from 29th June, 2016, 6th, 13th, & 27th July, 2016 and 6th & 14th September, 2016 which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.