

Minutes of a meeting of the **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK GROUP** held in Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding on Tuesday 4 October 2005

**Present:**

Councillors:

P M Walls (Chairman)  
B Alcock

Mark Stinson – Member Services Manager  
John Pares – Improvement and Communication Manager

15. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor F Biggadike.

Although there were insufficient councillors to reach a quorum the Chairman stated that, as they were a non-executive group, the meeting would proceed.

16. **NOTES**

The notes of the meeting held on 9 September 2005 were received, subject to the following amendments on page 2, list of bullet points.

Fifth bullet point – delete “Cabinet” and replace with “As a Council”

Sixth bullet point – insert the word “greater” between “Give” and “credit”

Eighth bullet point – add “Wisbech Standard and Kings Lynn News” after “PET”

Fifteenth bullet point – insert the words “continue to” between “to” and “sell”

Seventeenth bullet point – insert the words “reasons for low” between “Analyse” and “historical”

17. **SOUTH HOLLAND NOW**

The Improvement and Communication Manager reported on the development of the South Holland Now magazine. Following the last meeting, he had met with his team with a view to making the magazine a success. A number of points had been made, but it had been acknowledged that the key was ‘knowing the reader’. A magazine would normally target one idealised reader. However, in South Holland’s case it was necessary to use four demographic identities: the elderly couple, a young family, a single parent and a young person.

Members highlighted the importance of partnership working and suggested supplying organisations (e.g. Age Concern) with copies of the magazine. Concern was also expressed over the need to strike a balance between target audiences in respect of plain English. It was suggested that the magazine could run both children and older generation prize competitions such as picture drawing and cross-words. It was noted that space within the magazine was limited.

The Improvement and Communication Manager was happy take on board the above considerations.

**DECIDED:** That the Improvement and Communication Manager gives consideration to the use of ‘explosive’ or ‘must keep’ information and competitions in order to encourage customers to read and retain the magazine.

**18. IDENTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS AND ALLOCATION OF WORK**

Members identified the following proposals which they wished to take forward:

- **Tulip FM and general radio use**

Members asked how to make the best use of radio and what to do to get to use it.

**ACTION:** Sharon Dabell, Press, Marketing and Communications Team Leader to report back with statistics of successful radio use.

- **South Holland Centre booklets**

Members felt that the publication had improved, was located correctly and attracted readers. The use of mailing lists and strategic locations at the South Holland Centre and libraries was good.

Members raised the issue of new movers into the South Holland district and for an information pack to be made available. The Improvement and Communication Manager informed members that the Rural Action Zone in partnership with the Local Area Health Authority and Police had developed the Home Buyers Pack, which members were pleased to note.

The issue of a link to the website for new movers was raised. The Member Services Manager informed members that the link 'I am MOVING.com' was available on the district council's website. This website required a form to be completed, the information of which was then used to update all various utility bodies.

**ACTION:** The Improvement and Communication Manager and Member Services Manager to ask the web designer to raise the profile of this service on the website and to speak to the Customer Services Manager to see if a link from the website to trigger and update electoral, council tax and the South Holland Centre's mailing list could be set up.

- **Give greater credit to all partners in projects e.g. water taxis**

**ACTION:** Put in place procedures to ensure that greater credit is given to partners in projects, being mindful to handle matters delicately where there are multiple partners involved.

- **Volunteers – use to improve commentary onboard water taxis**

Members felt that other partners and agencies should be invited to contribute to provide a more balanced commentary.

**ACTION:** The Chairman to approach Councillor Andrew Woolf and raise with the Civic Society where appropriate, for volunteers to provide the commentary.

- **Team Briefing – suggested councillors briefing from same source**

**ACTION:** Members to be provided with copies of the staff 'New Shoots' magazine, in addition to Team Briefing.

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### 18. IDENTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS AND ALLOCATION OF WORK (Continued)

- **Staff Survey**

ACTION: Results of staff survey to be submitted to Performance Monitoring Panel as well as Cabinet for scrutiny.

- **Our Year Ahead**

ACTION: Members to be invited to talks/briefings which are held each year in May/June. Leader/Cabinet be encouraged to make a 'State of the Union' type address to Members each year.

- **Close working with schools**

Members aspired to encourage close working with secondary schools and involve them in local government issues i.e. voting; by using the 'citizenship' item of the schools' curriculum.

ACTION: Initial contact to be made with secondary schools to see how they felt about being involved in closer working with the district council through the curriculum 'citizenship'.

- **A – Z services and Frequently Asked Questions**

ACTION: Incorporate in South Holland Now.

- **Need to continue to 'sell' the one-stop shop for Customer Services**

Members felt that customer services needed to raise their profile, raise public awareness and continue to 'sell' their service through the use of information which is already circulated which would serve as a reminder.

ACTION: Design an eye catching, one liner 'logo' and to ask Parish Councils to display this on their noticeboards.

- **Analyse reasons for low historical voter turnout figures**

Members felt that, outside of the Cabinet, members had become disassociated, and there was also 'low public perception' of their role. This was a national trend that appeared to be pronounced in South Holland.

Members suggested that members' job profiles be revisited and that the remuneration panel be encouraged to recognise the contribution made by members serving on task groups. The Council needed to become more proactive in raising its profile in the business world. Partnership working, both strategic and voluntary, local area agreements and compacts were also suggested. A further idea to reinstate 'business lunches' was supported, whereby business leaders were invited to meet with the Chief Executive, Leaders and councillors of the Council.

ACTION: The Political Management Arrangements Working Party be asked to consider this item, and work with both Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

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**18. IDENTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS AND ALLOCATION OF WORK (Continued)**

- **Our family group – keeping public informed**

**ACTION:** Topics to be picked to show comparisons with our family group in the South Holland Now magazine.

- **Members' Web Pages**

Members considered that the following points should be taken into consideration in respect of the development of members' web pages:

- Protocols to be implemented
- Members to receive training
- Members to determine content
- Members to have significant control of web page
- Members to own their site

In addition members asked for the development of the current system already in place to be extended over a period of 18 months/2 years to include all members.

**ACTION:** The Member Services Manager and the Monitoring Officer to provide member training to clarify the appropriate use of the website and political association. At the end of the event a proforma to be completed by all members as the basis for their web pages.

- **Members Online**

Members raised concerns regarding the introduction of laptops to members, as a number of laptops had been unusable.

**ACTION:** A questionnaire to be circulated to all members seeking views on the investment made, usage, problems, and effectiveness of surgeries.

Questionnaire results to be forwarded to the Performance Monitoring Panel and then on to Cabinet.

- **Web Casting**

Members were informed that Web Casting council meetings was an item in the corporate plan a year ago. Therefore it was necessary to consider the proposal and provided support was found, fund next year 2006/07. Members felt that this was not a high priority, as they were aware of bad press and publicity.

**ACTION:** That a report on the scheme, together with costings, be provided to the Task Group.

**19. AREA COMMITTEES**

The Chairman deferred this item to the next meeting.

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### **20. CONSULTATIVE PANEL**

The Improvement and Communication Manager briefed members on a proposal which had been submitted to CMT.

CMT had been advised that the 'Viewpoint Panel', a joint project with Lincolnshire County Council and districts, had now stopped. There was limited budget for consultation. An opportunity was now available to set up a Panel for South Holland and to seek a way forward. The CPA result would be affected if no such process was available, and CMT had asked the Task Group to look into the matter and contribute towards the final report to Cabinet.

**ACTION:** Add to the next agenda - the Improvement and Communication Manager to give a presentation to the next meeting including surveys and the breakdown costs/figures of national Mori research.

### **21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was arranged for Monday 14 November 2005 at 3.30 pm.

(Meeting ended at 4.32 pm.)

(End of Minutes.)