

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Full Council 29/07/2021

Digital Communications

Agenda item 21/054 2: To RESOLVE to provide a budget of £300, , from General Reserves to Account Code 4140 Communications, to engage an expert consultant to provide guidance on digital communication features that should be considered in developing an updated Communications Strategy.

This decision can be taken under S.111 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The expenditure will help facilitate enhanced communications. Communication to the electorate is a Council function.

Background

An update of the Council Communications Strategy has been initiated which is aimed at further enhancing our communications with residents of the Parish. The drafting of the update is planned to be completed over the next few months.

The update will take place within the context of the Council Communications Working Party (WP) and will ultimately be presented to the Council for Review and potential adoption. Dependant upon time availability in the agenda for future Council meetings brief interim updates on progress will be provided to the Council as the work progresses.

It is anticipated that upon completion the proposed strategy will be well documented and have a broad scope, covering:

- what, when and how to communicate;
- roles & responsibilities;
- communications toolkit;
- standards of operation and interactions with other Council policies such as Freedom of Information and Data Protection Policies.

It is early days in the necessary study work but by inspection it is already clear that there will be a significant digital component within the study conclusions.

Digital communication is a fast moving field driven by modern day marketing and to ensure that the study is informed by the latest relevant thinking it is desired to engage an appropriate, (small business focused), expert to provide us with some guidance on digital opportunities and challenges that should be taken into consideration when developing the detailed strategy. It is foreseen at this stage that one to two days effort on the part of an expert will be required.

This input is needed at an early stage in the study to reduce the risk of WP wasted effort and re-work as might be incurred if the input is deferred to a later point in the study.

Incidentally, the general Terms of Reference for the Communications WP going forward will drafted (again for review) in parallel with but separate from this study.

Costs

The cost of this expert consultation is estimated at £300.

Further consultation exercises / costs are not currently envisaged nor indeed are any additional expenditures associated with the wider dimensions of the study anticipated.

However, as the study develops a need for and value of additional study expenditures may be identified (e.g. as a hypothetical example minor tweaks to the SMPC website) in which case further, likely modest, proposal(s)/budget resolution(s) will be brought forward.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this resolution is passed in favour of providing the requested budget.