

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held in the COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00pm on 19 MARCH 2018

Present: Councillor M Lemon (Chairman), A Dean and B Light

Officers present: R Auty (Assistant Director – Corporate Services), D Barden (Communications Officer) and B Ferguson (Democratic Services Officer).

PWG14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Dawn French and Councillors Fairhurst, Felton and Redfern.

PWG15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2018 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PWG16 NLGN EXERCISE RESULTS

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services presented the results of the NLGN exercise ‘What type of Council are you?’ which had been sent to Members of the PEWG, as well as to fifteen officers. The exercise asked Members to ‘score’ how outward looking or inward looking the Council was, and how engaged or apathetic residents were. The score was then used to define the council from one of four definitions: PLC Council, Networked Council, Navel-gazing Council and Tower of Babel Council.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said the results had been interesting as all four ‘types’ were represented in the results. He said it was difficult to draw any strong conclusions from the exercise although Members had scores at the more extreme end of the scale, whilst an officer’s occupation seemed to impact on their view of what type of council UDC was.

Members discussed the results and the ‘council type’ definitions outlined in the exercise papers. Members agreed that they wanted a Council which was both outward looking and engaged with the public, but felt current engagement with the public had to improve.

In response to a Member question, the Assistant Director – Corporate Services said the thinking behind the consultee responses to the exercise could be ascertained and he would circulate these results before the next meeting.

PWG17

EXISTING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Members discussed public engagement methods currently being used by the Council.

The Chairman said he was surprised by the number of methods used to engage with the public and the following were discussed:

- Council, Cabinet and committee meetings
- Member surgeries
- Customer Services
- Tenant Forum, Tenant Regulatory Panel and multi-agency information trailer
- Local community meetings, Drinks with Community Links and Safety Matters
- Citizens' Panel
- Social media and Keep Me Posted e-newsletter
- Publications

In response to a Member request, the Assistant Director – Corporate Services said he could find out how many people listened to the audiomminutes recordings on the website.

Members requested that public forums were put on the next meeting's agenda for discussion.

Councillor Dean requested that a report be brought to the next meeting, outlining the trend in use of social media, and how widely printed media was being circulated.

The Chairman said his conclusion was that UDC was not engaging with the public as well as they should be.

Councillor Light said the working group needed to establish what 'type' of council it wanted to be in terms of public engagement. She said it was important that the information flow was reciprocal and that public feedback had a meaningful impact on council policy.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said a scoping report would be brought to the next PEWG meeting.

PWG18

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members agreed that PEWG meetings should be held on a monthly basis.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said a meeting in April would be arranged and the date and time would be circulated by Democratic Services.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm.