

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2018 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor M Lemon (Chairman)
Councillors B Light and J Redfern

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), D Barden (Fixed Term Communications Manager), A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer) and D French (Chief Executive)

PWG10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean and Fairhurst.

PWG11 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PWG12 PRESENTATION AND FACILITATED DISCUSSION LED BY DAVID EVANS, FOUNDER OF THE CAMPAIGN COMPANY, AUTHORS OF THE LGA NEW CONVERSATIONS GUIDE

The Chairman welcomed David Evans to the meeting.

David Evans gave a presentation about the Local Government Association New Conversations Guide. He said it was a useful resource and ought to help the working group. Relevant topics raised included the lack of trust that the public had in government, the difference between consultation and engagement, how to evaluate engagement, and the importance of digital technology.

Members discussed the importance of involving a range of people in public engagement, including councillors, officers and the public.

The Chief Executive said officers would look into how the Council was currently engaging with the public and report to the next meeting.

Members said local forums had been one method previously used as a means of public engagement, but that these had tended to attract the same small group of people on a regular basis, instead of engaging the wider community.

David Evans said Next Door was a social media platform which allowed people to keep up to date with what was happening in their local area. Both individuals and the Council could make accounts.

Councillor Redfern left the meeting.

David Evans said to consult effectively, the Council should align three core functions: to lead (strategy), to speak (communication) and to engage (to listen).

Members discussed the importance of measuring the success of attempts to engage the public, including the cost of a project versus the value received from it.

The Chairman thanked David Evans for attending and said the meeting had been useful for the working group.

PWG13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman said a member workshop had been scheduled at the time of the working group's next meeting on 6 March 2018. He proposed moving it to another date.

It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would canvass availability and rearrange the date of the next meeting.

The next meeting of the working group was subsequently scheduled at 6pm on 19 March 2018.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.