

Communications Motion

One thing that has come up time and time again is that the public feel quite disconnected from the council and what happens here, and feel that communication could be improved. Therefore as a new council I would invite councillors today to help us start fresh and work to improve this area.

We all have a connection with our wards, else we would not be here, and however we communicate with them, whether that be via social media, letter, flyers, or posters in key community places, we can make a big difference to how connected residents are to the council and our activities.

More people have been speaking at council meetings in the last year because myself, Dez and a few other individuals have tried hard to let the public know how and when they can get involved. Social media has been a real tool for this, so I propose a Kettering Town Council social media presence. This would be a really great way to share upcoming events, issues, consultations and so on with the public. All members would be encouraged to help contribute and share their local projects, helping our work as councillors become more transparent and increasing public trust. My suggested way to do this is have submitted information from councillors uploaded by the Clerk, and for councillors to manage any feedback from constituents. Any member could add factual information or events in an agreed format to help share out the workload, such as meetings where members of the public can speak. It will be a place only for positive and respectful conversations in the interests of the town, and any residents with complaints should be directed to formal complaints reporting system on the website.

In addition to social media, when we have public surgeries or consultation, or any offline communications, we should try to communicate:

- Upcoming projects within the council and how members of the public can offer their view/ideas
- Upcoming meetings where the public can speak

Promoting these things means the public will feel more informed and included, whether or not they choose to bring forward their views, helping create better support for the council and our decisions. In addition, the key role of all councillors is to “bring the views of their communities into the council’s decision making process”, and getting more people to bring forward their own views to meetings, means we can do this more easily.

Lastly, the council website meeting calendar is great for those of us who know how to navigate it, but for the public, knowing what each meeting is all about, when they can speak at them and how to speak when they do so can be daunting to understand. I suggest that we create a dedicated page for the public on how they can get involved with the council - on this page could be listed upcoming projects being worked on now, upcoming meetings that are open to the public, guidance on what to expect at a council meeting and how to address the council, social networks and community groups we support with which they can get involved and more. I would be happy to create a draft of this page and send to members so we can all add to this and make it our own.

We need to continue to look for the best way to connect the public with the council’s work but I hope you agree in our need to put a renewed focus on communication and I welcome any additional motions in future to compliment this motion:

Kettering Town Council will set up a social media presence to better communicate with residents about upcoming meetings, events and projects, consultations and how

they can share their views, along with anything else deemed in the interest of residents. Members should encourage public engagement with the council and its work as much as possible. A page to be set up on the Kettering Town Council website sharing this information.