Communicating with the community online: Councillor S Jarratt.

Requirements

- Inform parishioners in a timely manner of regular, irregular and ad hoc meetings
- Make available meeting minutes and agendas in a timely manner
- Inform parishioners of other news and initiatives related to Parish Council activity.
- Pass on information from other agencies and organisations to the community (eg, road closures, sources of funding etc.). Specifically the sort of information that gets sent in emails to Sarah B that is relevant to the whole community
- Implement a sustainable solution that does not rely on **any** specialist technical skills.
- The community should be able to access information on PCs, tablets and smart phones
- No increase in annual IT charges
- No increase in the amount of time Sarah B currently spends keeping the website up to date, adding the minutes and agendas to the website and forwarding the useful emails to us.
- Promote our new approach to the community

Approach

I propose that we enhance the parish council website to achieve these requirements. I suggest that we maintain the website as the master source for all our on-line communications with the community and provide **automatic** notification whenever new information is posted on the website. This would be via email subscription and Twitter to alert those people who are interested enough to sign up to follow us.

We want people to sign up for email updates and/or Twitter updates, so we should publicise our new communications approach via the Parish Magazine, notice boards etc.

Proof of concept

I have created a temporary website for Gayton Parish Council as a proof of concept. I have cut and pasted most of the content of the old website into the temporary one to give an idea of how an enhanced website should look. The whole proof of concept took me less than a day's work.

Please have a play with the test website.

Go to https://susannegpc.wordpress.com. DO NOT give this address to anyone else!

- What do you think of the 'News' feature? Is it clear and useable?
- Although you can't see it in action, each 'News' item created an automatic tweet to notify any Twitter users that want to follow us. They can see the whole news item by clicking on the link in the tweet.
- Each news item also sent an automatic email to people who signed up to follow us by email
- Adding news items can be done simply by an authorised person sending an email to the website, so it should be super easy for Sarah B to post news updates.
- Adding minutes and agendas can also be done in a similar, easy way
- I haven't corrected any of the errors in the old website
- Although it looks like I've moved everything over from the old website, I haven't. There is a straightforward but tedious bit of work to do moving all documents, minutes and agendas over if we decide to do so.
- The old website has not changed at all.

Decision required

The questions for the PC are:

- Are the requirements in the first section complete and correct and do you approve them as the basis for moving forward on our approach to improving online communication with the community?
- Does the PC support the solution demonstrated in the proof of concept?
- Does the PC want to look at whether our existing IT supplier can support our requirements or whether we should move to a different platform?
    - How much are we paying at the moment?
    - A solution based on my proof of concept is basically free.
    - Do we want/need to save money?
- For a sustainable solution, it would be prudent to retain some sort of professional IT support as a clerk and/or councillors with the required skills may not always be around!