

Communications Group – Minutes - 25th January 2024 – 7:30PM

Present: Cllrs. Alesi, Arger, Castro, Martin, Riordan, Sharp

1. Apologies: all present
2. Matters arising from last meeting
 - a. Communications technology
(MS365, Laptops, Microphone system, Projector and screen)

JC updates about current situation: the council already owns a projector and a screen that can be used in meetings and was used, for example, in the last 3G Pitch meeting. The Microphone system and laptops are conditional to the approval of MS365.

In relation to MS365, JC held a meeting with the Clerk at Pembury PC. Our Clerk was also invited and attended. Notes to the meeting shared as an appendix to these minutes. Interesting to note that in the case of Pembury, it was the Clerk who promoted the move to MS365 during COVID times to enable a better communication within the parish council.

The following day, JC had a meeting with the PC Office about MS365, discussing pros and cons. The Clerk wants to do more research, check with KALC and MBC about feasibility and have another meeting. JC cannot attend the meeting due to family commitments; he will not be in the country. Other members of the Communications Group will reschedule the meeting with the Clerk. The Communications Group considers that after the meeting, the group will request at Full Council to approve the move towards MS365.

b. Old website

The old website is not accessible anymore and the Communications Group wants to thank the office for their successful efforts to achieve this.

3. Village Update – Spring

We discuss the articles and change some of the wording, select some pictures and decide the way ahead. JC will put everything together and will share the document for proofreading and other changes with the rest of the group and with the PC Office. It needs to be sent to Paxman by the 2nd of February.

Collation will be Saturday 17th February at the West Hall, 10am. JC to liaise with the PC Office to see if streets and numbers needed can be ready before collation.

Distribution can start immediately afterwards.

January	SPRING UPDATE –	Copy: 26 January To typesetter: 02 February To printer: 09 February Collation: 17 February Distribution: 19 February
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4. Village Update / Annual Report – Schedule, for Council

Annual Report

We discuss the way ahead with the Annual Report, which is coming next. JC comments on the different sections, mainly: cover with 8 pictures summarising the year, Chairman section, Finances section, Council tree, Council Groups section and other Community Groups section. SEHT will have its space to help the group capturing the residents' attention and recruiting.

We discuss the graph for the finances of the PC. The decision is that expenses will be a pie chart, income will possibly be numbers, and how the Council Tax is broken down into different precepts will be another graph.

Village Update

We also discuss the way ahead with the Village Update. JC comments on his vision: Council Groups with some relevant community groups, on a rota. The *News From the Past* section will return, as well as a Volunteers section. The group agreed to continue with the shorter end of the Village Update final section that has been used lately. A cultural section will continue. We discuss that an insight of a current relevant resident would be a good way ahead (pharmacist, doctor, pastor, etc.). This will be discussed in forthcoming meetings.

5. Logo

JC summarises the current situation. We have a discussion about the origin of the name of the village. In a previous meeting we had agreed to try to extract and use one of the motifs from the old Viking door at the All Saints' Church. JC presents an extract of one of the central motifs, as well as pictures from a Tudor panel also in the same church which could hold some historical reference about the village.

The group decides to go ahead trying to develop the door motif, suggesting possible designs and how to add the name of the parish council to the design, as well as suggests what part of the Tudor panel may be interesting for a logo.

The Communications Group is glad that we may have finally found a way forward with the logo for the Parish Council.

6. Fleece jacket / ID cards

MAI considers that there should be fleece jackets and ID cards for all members of the Parish Council (councillors and staff) once we have a logo and a distinctive colour. Often, while doing council work we have to identify ourselves to residents and services and at the moment that is done by word.

PR will research prices for Fleece jackets with a personalised logo and come back to the group.

JC shows some examples of how Canva, which we hold a licence for, can be used to produce suitable personalised ID cards once we have a logo, as well.

7. Chairman Video reports – schedule

All the members of the Communications Group agree how positive the Chairman Video Reports used to be. PR is happy to go ahead and produce the videos. The problem he has always encountered is that he is not able to produce them using YouTube as it does not work well on his phone. He has

always done them in Facebook with the Parish Council account and then get the subtitles inserted, which is a painstaking task but necessary to make the videos accessible to all residents.

JC to produce a schedule that does not overlap with the written publications (Village Updates and Annual Report) and to request to council to allow PR to be able to post to the PC Facebook page.

8. AOB

D Day celebrations: Request for information about what the group is doing to support D Day celebrations, 6th June. AS confirms that this has been discussed by SCENIC, who has been in touch with SCEG, as they are organising some events. The PC will support SCEG. AS to write to SCEG offering support to what they organise and to invite them to come back to the Council with a proposal of what they need the PC to do for them.

Historic Boards: there is a possibility for a cross-group participation in producing and displaying historic boards across relevant places in the village. The Communications Group will start thinking about this on following meetings and will liaise with SCENIC.

9. Next Meeting – 5th March, 7:30pm

Questions for Pembury PC (notes from meeting with Pembury PC Clerk)

1. How long you have had the MS365 for? What did you have before?

The council moved from an old system to MS365 during lockdown to help the PC Office to run during those difficult times.

It also helped with the amount of printing, as it changed from printing 17 packs to none.

Some councillors initially wanted their printed copy and they were given a grace period of 3 months.

2. How did you do the transition to the new system? How much did it cost?

It was done overnight, four years ago. It did not cost anything extra other than the normal monthly payments. At the moment there are 2 laptops, at 35 £ per month on a silver service. The laptops were bought through Heliocentrix.

3. What business accounts are you using? Councillors/office?

The Council is using Business accounts as follows:

The groundsman is using a kiosk account, with minimum accessibility (emails).

Councillors are using the basic accounts.

The office is using the standard accounts but wants to upgrade to premium because of the additional security features.

4. Do councillors have their own laptops? What models/cost?

Councillors work on their own devices, as there was resistance to move to council devices.

There is an IT policy in place (available online).

5. What is the annual cost for this? Is it cheaper than the previous?

£200 per month approximately plus VAT (exempt). If there are vacancies, the price is

(Note: Pembury PC consist of 13 councillors).

6. What is the policy in terms of councillors using their own devices?

There is an IT policy, publicly available > <https://pemburyparishcouncil.gov.uk/documents/it-policy/>

7. What were the benefits of using MS365?

It mostly benefits the office, as they can work from home, to external hard disks, inbuilt security system (antivirus, etc.)

8. If councillors are not very technology wise, how do you support them?

If they have an issue with Microsoft 365, they are given the Heliocentrix phone number as they have their own particular devices. Work is carried out online.

The Council and Heliocentrix have a legal contract but councillors don't.

9. Did you have a lot of opposition to implementing the system? Fears?

There was certain resistance. Also a councillor was refusing to use his own device so the Council got a device for him.

10. Did you do any training?

No but it was lockdown. The clerk sat with councillors and talked them through the system.

11. How has it affected the office?

The office can work and access all documents from home. They decide what is visible to councillors or not. In terms of the dealings with Heliocentrix, cannot speak highly enough. They are not considering moving to other company in the foreseeable future.

12. Do you use an antivirus alongside the system?

No. Relying on the system inbuilt by Microsoft (Windows/Microsoft Defender has antivirus, antifishing... features). It is all inside Microsoft.

13. What apps from MS365 do you use?

Outlook, Word, Excell, Planner, SharePoint, Ondrive, Teams meetings, Onenote, Lists, Forms... Use of MS Forms to consult residents, for example.

Do you use Sharepoint as well? Have you changed how it looks/got help to set it up?

Yes, mainly by the office who decides what councillors can access. No use of it by Council or Community Groups, maybe because of the lack of expertise by councillors.

14. What IT issues do you face annually?

Aside of the £200 a month for the Microsoft 365 accounts, £35/month per laptop per month for maintenance but it is hardly used.

15. How is it working with Heliocentrix? Is it cost effective?

The experience with Heliocentrix is brilliant. The cost is around £2400. Cannot speak highly enough and they are not looking to change companies.

16. What sort of contract do you have with them? Do you do PAYG in all your accounts?

£35 per laptop per month. Work is on laptops. The councillors accounts are included in the monthly fee for subscribing to Microsoft 365.

17. Has anyone got administrator rights or is it all done through Heliocentrix?

Everything is handled through Heliocentrix. The Clerk just emails them the requests: create/erase accounts, etc.

18. How do you create or delete new accounts? If through Heliocentrix, how much does it cost?

Everything is through email with Heliocentrix and it is included in the account fee. The price is slightly higher than buying it through Microsoft.

For example, Kiosk account for the caretaker is £1.97.

Councillors accounts are the Business Basic (all web based) £5.88.

Office accounts are Business Standard £12.36

(both web based and applications installed in the computer

but want to upgrade to Business Premium for their extra security features.)

*Normal prices for Microsoft are £4.90 for Business Basic, £10.30 for Business Standard, and £18.10 for Business Premium

Additional information:

It would be good to put in place some protocols, i.e.:

Saying yes/no to meeting invitations and sending apologies.

Sign to accept agenda by emails