

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 20 March 2023

Title: Communications Report

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer - Polly Inness

Background

The Town Council is seeking to outsource the website and transfer to a gov.uk template style site. At the same time, it is moving to improve communications as per the Communications Strategy actions by improving content and information on our noticeboards and reinstating a digital mailing list.

Current Situation

Spring Newsletter Distribution Problems

There has been a very disappointing delay to the distribution of the Spring newsletter, despite deadlines for copy being met. The original plan to have the newsletter delivered by Royal Mail in the week beginning 27th Feb did not happen and the print/design company offered the week beginning 6th March. In response they were told that this was too late and would mean the newsletter would be reaching homes too close to the Annual Town Meeting and would not give residents sufficient notice. The company then offered hand delivery starting the 28th Feb that would “happen earlier but take a little longer”. It has in fact taken two weeks and is still not complete on the day of the Annual Town Meeting. The company owner has apologised for this in response to a complaint made.

This company has been used successfully before and the hand delivery company employed by them had been much more efficient. The weather has not been noticeably bad enough to cause a delay of such length and there was no reason to suppose that they would fail on this occasion.

Website

The website is consistently full and deleting items through the WordPress library is having little impact. The Communications Officer will set aside some time to remove backups from the hosting server.

The Communications Officer has contacted website providers for quotes on the attached appendix. The quote request stipulates that it is important to retain the Council’s current domain name and that the Mod Gov system must be able to be integrated.

In the meantime, the Communications Officer has carried out website mapping and started streamlining the current website and adding quick links to items such as news etc. from the homepage.

Mailing List

The mailing list capture forms are being prepared and will be implemented on the Council's social media sites and website. Other opportunities to sign people up to the mailing list will be exploited where possible including sign up slips at the Annual Town Meeting.

Noticeboards

The noticeboards have been updated and the criteria for display of posters and information in various areas has been revisited as a result of a few spurious requests to display items that do not meet these, in order to ensure that everyone is treated fairness, and no one has cause to complain. The cemetery noticeboards are currently being refreshed with consistent messaging and accurate information.

The noticeboards at The Leys have now all been vandalised to the extent that they are not useable, and some have now been removed. The boards are smashed and kicked through. If the boards are to be replaced (there is a need for information to be available in the area) it is suggested that one is mounted on a wall of The Coffee Shed (in consultation with Court Hubs CIC), so that it cannot be kicked through. Prices for a tamperproof 4 x A4 board with locks start at around £350.

Press Coverage

Not available at this meeting due to staff resourcing issues. The items from the last period will be included with the next report.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

- Until quotes are received it is not possible to give a financial estimate for the website.
- Indicative price for noticeboards to replace the one at the Leys are above.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Review the sites provided by the web companies/advise if there is a preferred style and,
2. Whether the Council wishes to purchase and install a new noticeboard at The Leys and,
3. To note, discuss the disappointment of the newsletter distribution.