
Agenda Item:	Communications Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 27 January 2025
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

Background

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on general communication matters and progress made since the last meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee.

Current Situation

Website & WCAG 2.2.AA progress

The Communications and Community Engagement officer and the Business Administration Assistant have made checks on the Witney Town Council website and much of it is already compliant. There are some home page issues caused by a third-party software plug in for the Facebook news feed. It isn't something officers could fix without removing the Facebook Widget. The news is available elsewhere on the site and a screen reader is likely to ignore the fault. Officers will continue to try to source a new widget when time permits.

There are further enhancements to pages on the Council's website underway which include adding a Play Areas page highlighting inclusive equipment, promoting the Council's statuses on Disability Confidence and Civility & Respect, a new residents page, FAQ's page and Why Become a Councillor page.

Annual Newsletter

As previously agreed, officers are progressing the annual newsletter as an 8-page A5 leaflet within budget and with the same local supplier as 2024. A delivery slot has been requested for the week commencing 3rd March 2025. This allows enough time for advertising the Annual Town Meeting on 19th March 2025.

An issue with postcodes delivered to by Royal Mail has been uncovered – if Windrush Place is included with the delivery, the newsletter would also be delivered to the Ducklington and Curbridge areas. Another source of hand delivery in this area is being explored.

Proposed content of this newsletter includes:

- Annual resident's survey
- 'Investing in a Better Witney' - Council Budget & Precept Information, what costs what
- Who does what graphic

- Annual Town Meeting Advert
- Corn Exchange What's On
- What's on at WTC venues – inc. VE Day Information
- You Said, We Did - link
- Land Responsibilities - link

If Members have any other items they feel should be included please advise the Lead officer as soon as possible.

Annual Report 2024-25

Officers are compiling a format for an Annual Town report that will be used at the Annual Town Meeting and will also form the basis for other documents that will use some of the same content. An annual report is a requirement of the NALC Local Council Award Scheme Silver award.

Social Media

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer has noted the Council gets very little engagement from anything posted on X. It generally gets liked or reposted by one or other of two or three followers. The Council remains very busy on Facebook and Instagram and there has been a request to expand what it does on Linked In. Staff last posted on X in November 2024 and will continue to post anything that needs to be promoted as widely as possible on there but would like to build on the Linked in Profile in the following way. As well as using it for recruitment officers would like to start with a review of Witney Town Council's year. The Council is a dynamic, trailblazing and pioneering council that has seen many exciting projects and initiatives take place.

Officers are aware that many other Councils follow what WTC does with interest and frequently contact us to discuss some of our projects and events, that they are considering undertaking for themselves.

Witney Annual Town Meeting

In response to changes being made to the Annual Town Meeting to make it more interactive and less being 'talked at'.

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has been considering ways to use Slido or a similar App to ask questions of the audience which they can answer discreetly from a mobile phone. <https://www.slido.com/>

They are also able to answer questions which might help those who are a little more reserved to take an active part and get a question answered. The Council could set an interactive quiz/guessing game regarding the budget and our spending. How much do they think the Council spend v what they think the Council SHOULD spend, for example.

Press Coverage

Attached as appendices A and B are the summaries of press coverage compiled by the Business Administration Apprentice.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The newsletter is delivered to every household in paper format and published digitally online. The digital version is available to visually impaired to be read by a digital reader, can be made larger and the colours amended per the WCAG 2.2.AA legislation. The newsletter will advise to contact the Town Hall if another format is required. The fact it is delivered to every household ensures the hardest to reach residents are reached.
- b) Biodiversity – none
- c) Crime & Disorder – The Council continues to share information concerning crime and disorder on its social media pages.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Council has to balance the need to communicate effectively with all residents against harm to the environment. This year, officers have requested the newsletter is not printed on glossy paper.

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.

- There is a risk that if the Council moves away from the X platform it could be viewed negatively.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Effective communication with residents enhances the relationship between local government and the community, fostering trust and engagement.

Financial implications

- The annual newsletter cost is within the agreed budget.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider whether the Council should focus less on the underused X platform and develop an interesting profile with a look back at the year on Linked In.