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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Communications Report
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	Monday, 15 September 2025
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various communication matters.

### Background

Witney Town Council's communications need to be fit for 2025 and beyond. Effective communication will be fundamental to fulfilling the priorities of the Council's emerging Strategic plan and achieving its goals. The Communications Strategy is due for review.

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer was asked to investigate the pros, cons and costs of an additional printed Newsletter and this is also reported here.

### Current Situation

#### Communications Strategy Review

The original 2021 strategy has been reviewed and is being rewritten to reflect where actions, improvements and changes have been implemented and new practices adopted.

Analytics and external data sources have been updated. A new action plan has been generated designed to address the objectives and aims of the strategy.

While reviewing the original communications Strategy the Communications and Community Engagement officer discovered a reference to a survey that focused purely on communications as one of the questions in the 2018 Resident's Satisfaction survey. Although there was a small number of respondents it would be interesting to repeat this now across a large number of platforms and age groups and see how much has changed and to see if and how, Witney reflects the National trend of a continuing shift to digital channels. Back then respondents were asked to tick all the boxes that applied to how they found out about Town Council news. The results are shown below just for context. The Witney Gazette was a big source of news for the demographic that responded which was mostly 60+ This is reproduced below for interest.

### ***Communication Section, 2018 Resident's Satisfaction Survey 2018***

<i>Website</i>	
55.00%	88
—	
<i>Social Media</i>	
41.88%	67
—	
<i>Local Paper</i>	
56.25%	90
—	
<i>Posters</i>	
20.00%	32
—	
<i>Newsletters</i>	
29.38%	47
—	
<i>Direct Visit</i>	
1.88%	3
—	
<i>Council Minutes</i>	
3.75%	6
—	
<i>Council App</i>	
5.63%	9
—	
<i>Noticeboards</i>	
23.13%	37

*Total Respondents: 160*

The final draft of the Communications Strategy will be available for review/adoption by Councillors at the November meeting.

#### **Additional Newsletter with Paid Advertising**

Introducing paid advertising into the Town Council newsletter could create a useful new income stream which might cover some or all of the cost of an additional printed issue, delivered to households in the second half of the year. It would also strengthen partnerships with local businesses and community groups. To succeed, contents need to have a local interest to residents but demonstrate value to potential advertisers.

A media kit would be needed and this is a huge task. It needs to outline the newsletter's purpose, audience profile, advertising options, pricing, and booking details. Advertisers could be secured through direct outreach, use of advertising platforms, or by offering sponsorship packages such as dedicated sections or whole-issue sponsorships. Pricing would depend on ad size, placement, and duration. The Council is at a disadvantage here in that we have no history and no client base from which to draw testimonials.

The benefits include revenue generation and stronger relationships with the business community. However, there are risks around reputational damage, community backlash over commercialisation, and the need to maintain editorial independence. All adverts would also have to comply with UK advertising standards.

Selling advertising space would place considerable strain on an already at capacity team with a risk to a smaller output of the 'hot off the press' news and community engagement posting we are currently able to achieve.

In summary, paid advertising could provide clear financial and community benefits, but careful management would be required to protect credibility and public trust.

Approximate costs are:

**Size** A4 Portrait - Endorse folded to A5

**Artwork** New artwork files supplied to [REDACTED]. Provide PDF Proof

**Text** 8pp printed 4/4 on 130gsm FSC Gloss

**Finishing** Fold, stitch, trim and endorse folded to A5

**Pricing** 15,000 £2,987.00

**Delivery** Royal Mail Door Drop to 6 Postcodes (13661 total drops) (not all delivered again this year)

Separate delivery to Windrush Place by [REDACTED] 1k copies - £144 plus VAT

The price is confirmed once copy is received and does not include design costs at £60 per hour, because we design and produce and edit in house.

### **Website**

The website newsletter page has been tidied up and now has a link to archived issues.

The Town Councils Vision and Mission statements along with the six pillars that underpin these are now on the Council page of the website.

### **Website speed**

Checks have been made at random times on the performance and speed of the Council's website. It is currently performing well and loading at a good speed. Please continue to report any drop in performance. There is a weekly update each Thursday where the site is unavailable for a short while.

### **Covid-19 Memorial**

The memorial has regrettably been subject to persistent anti-social behaviour over the summer period and the subject of its removal has been raised.

Given that the Council paid a significant sum to repair the memorial in May, this was not the preferred option of the Council when it was last discussed. Instead, discussion centred around its signage and promotion – residents didn't know where it was, what it was, and why it was important. Members may like to consider allocating a budget for improved signage or an information board. Temporary signage has been trialled. The bench does seem to be used by many, so perhaps a notice informing people that if the memorial is subjected to continuous vandalism, both it and the bench will be removed might be effective.

## **Press Coverage**

Latest press coverage information from January 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and is attached as **Appendix A**.

## **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 delivery of a further newsletter would provide information to those unable to access digital means.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – We would be printing more copies of the newsletter to give access to certain parts of the community.

## **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.

As reported above.

## **Social Value**

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

The addition of a second delivered paper magazine in the year would provide information on community events and initiatives, potentially allowing access to further social inclusion.

## **Financial Implications**

- The cost of printing and delivery a further newsletter is approximately £4,000, which could be recouped by sponsorship/advertising.
- Cost of improved signage for the Covid-19 memorial. If agreed, quotes would be required ahead of the next meeting.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider repeating the 2018 Communications survey and
2. Consider the pros and cons of an additional newsletter that relies on advertising sales.
3. Decide whether further messaging for the Covid-19 Memorial is worthwhile.