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**Agenda Item:** Communications Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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

## **Current Situation**

### **Residents' Communication Preference Survey**

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has issued a Residents' Communication Preference Survey. The survey has been designed to gather feedback from the community on the effectiveness, accessibility and reach of the Council's communication channels, and the findings will be used to inform future improvements to communication and engagement practices. A copy is attached as **Appendix A**.

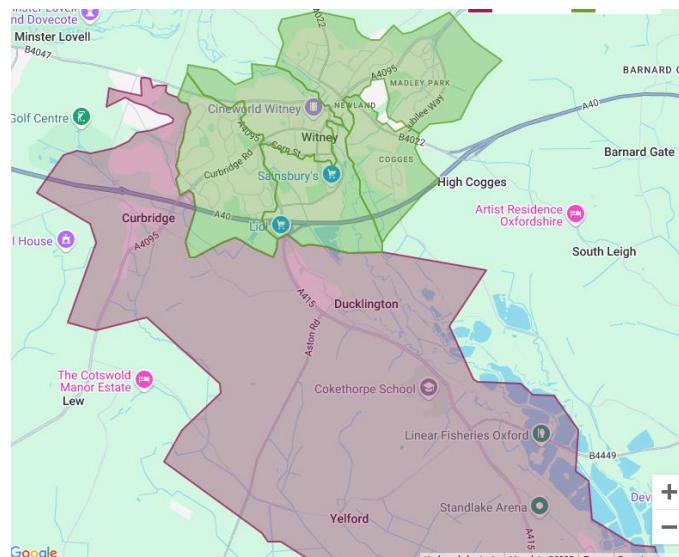
The survey is available in both paper and digital formats. Paper copies can be collected from the Administration Office, while the digital version is hosted on the Council's website and promoted across its online platforms.

To increase reach and encourage participation from groups that are traditionally under-represented, the survey will also be shared with local schools and, where possible, hospitality venues such as pubs. Councillors are asked to consider how best to achieve this. Promotion will be supported through a coordinated campaign using posters and digital signage to maximise awareness and participation. The survey can be accessed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WTC-comms26>

### **2026 Spring Newsletter**

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer is currently preparing content for the 2026 Spring Newsletter, which will again be produced in A5 format. Quotes for printing and distribution will be sought shortly; however, it is necessary to confirm arrangements as soon as possible if Royal Mail delivery is to be used again this year.

Distribution of the newsletter is a significant expense, and Royal Mail delivery is unreliable due to postcode overlaps. Newer estates in on the outskirts of Witney with an OX29 postcode are problematical as this postcode also includes all of Ducklington and Curbridge and surrounds. The map of where we have to exclude just to allow for Windrush Place looks this.



RM does not differentiate so it will blanket deliver to these areas as it works through the codes, and this might explain the lack of spare copies and the sporadic lack of delivery to some areas in Witney in previous years.

To overcome this last year, we organised hand delivery to Windrush Place and one other OX29 post coded area within Witney.

This is the costing for that

**Title:** Spring Newsletter

**Format:** A5 8pp

**Quantity:** 1,000

**Location:** Windrush Place, Witney

**Distribution from:** early March 2025

**Price:** £145 plus VAT

Compared with the cost for production and delivery of the bulk of the newsletter; which was:

13,500 Spring Newsletter - A5 8pp (Stitched) £ 2,413.00 including delivery -1000 which were hand delivered as above.

#### **Councillors in the Café review**

Last year the Committee reviewed Cllrs in the Café with a view to ascertaining whether members of the public were accessing the opportunity to chat with Councillors and whether members found this useful. At the time it was deemed to be useful and well attended. Members are invited to report back again on whether it is still considered a valuable form of engagement and gathering feedback.

## **Website**

Following a recent audit of the website, the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement has been removing obsolete information and updating. The site is still very large with nine pages of information for the Lake and Country Park alone. Officers will be consulting with the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer to see where this can be streamlined to make it a little more manageable time wise.

In addition, the Facebook widget has been removed from the website's front page, as it generated multiple accessibility errors within third-party software that could not be resolved.

## **Press Coverage**

Latest press coverage information from November 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and follows this item.

Officers are issuing a weekly round-up of social media news and events directly to press contacts. This will go out on Thursday where possible and include news posts and stories and full press releases where applicable. Officers will include any photographs and comments from Chair, Mayor, or Leader where possible.

## **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 Council's communications activity seeks to minimise equality risks by using a mix of digital and non-digital channels to reach residents of different ages, abilities, and circumstances. The availability of the Communications Preference Survey in both paper and online formats helps to reduce digital exclusion, particularly for older residents and those without regular internet access.

### **b) Biodiversity –**

No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from the communications work or production of printed materials.

### **c) Crime & Disorder –**

Improved communication and community engagement may contribute to greater awareness of community activities and indirectly support community cohesion, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.

### **d) Environment & Climate Emergency –**

While print production has some environmental impact, efforts will be made to minimise waste, use sustainable materials where possible, and promote digital communication channels in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

## **Risk**

The risks linked to the matters in this report are low. However, there is a possibility that staff time, tight deadlines, and reliance on external suppliers for printing and delivery could cause some pressure on resources or delays. There is also a risk that some residents may not be reached, particularly where digital access is limited or postal delivery is unreliable. These risks will be reduced through careful planning, using a range of communication methods, checking delivery arrangements, and regularly reviewing how the Council engages with the community.

## **Social Value**

The Council's communications activity delivers clear social value by promoting transparency, improving awareness of Council services and initiatives, and encouraging residents to engage with local decision-making. Activities such as the Town Council newsletter, consultation surveys, press engagement and *Councillors in the Café* provide opportunities for two-way communication and help build trust between councillors, officers, and the community.

## **Financial Implications**

The production and distribution of printed materials, particularly the Spring Newsletter, represent a significant and recurring cost to the Council. Royal Mail delivery issues linked to postcode overlaps can result in inefficiencies, requiring additional expenditure on hand delivery to ensure comprehensive distribution within Witney.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider and provide feedback on the Residents' Communication Preference Survey and advise on additional ways to encourage participation from under-represented groups.
2. Comment on the continued value and effectiveness of *Councillors in the Café* as a method of community engagement.
3. Note the proposed approach to the production and distribution of the 2026 Spring Newsletter, including the challenges associated with Royal Mail delivery and the use of hand delivery where required.