
Agenda Item:	Communications Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 23 March 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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

Current Situation

2026 Spring Newsletter

A review of newsletter distribution has highlighted potential issues with delivery. Of the 15 staff and Councillors who responded to a request to confirm receipt, only three confirmed that they had received a copy through their door. One of these added that it was bundled in with three other leaflets. A follow-up email was issued to the distributor requesting further information on how delivery was carried out, whether any issues were encountered, and whether delivery data is available. A copy of this correspondence is included at **Appendix A**. Councillors should consider how they would like to address this.

Surveys

To date, 57 responses have been received for the annual satisfaction survey and 47 responses for the communications preferences survey. Officers intend to further promote both surveys via social media in the coming weeks to increase participation and ensure a broader and more representative dataset.

Digital Newsletters

Officers have offered space within the digital newsletter to local charities that attend the Witney Forum, which has been met with a positive response.

Participating organisations provide their own content and images in line with agreed deadlines. This initiative serves to raise the profile and extend the reach of local groups, whether they are promoting recruitment, training opportunities, support services, or general updates, while also enhancing the newsletter by incorporating a wider range of voices and softening its corporate tone.

This offer is currently limited to the digital newsletter, as it does not incur additional printing costs.

This opportunity to contribute content to the digital newsletter could also be extended to all groups listed on the Council's website under the partners page, further strengthening engagement with local organisations.

Vevox Polling App

The Council subscribed to the polling and Q&A platform VEVOX for use at the Annual Town Meeting. This platform represents a cost-effective option, at approximately one-third of the cost of comparable alternatives, while offering a high degree of versatility. Officers are currently familiarising themselves with its functionality and exploring additional uses, including use at consultation events. Members are invited to suggest further uses to ensure maximum value for money and to maximise feedback capture.

Press Coverage

Latest press coverage information from January 2026 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement see **Appendix B**.

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.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider how to respond to the delivery issues encountered with this year's paper newsletter.
2. Consider additional uses for Vevox as a method of community engagement and feedback gathering.