

**Date:** 18 September 2017

**Title:** Communications Update

**Purpose of the Report:** To update Members in respect of Town Council Communications.

**Contact Officer:** Amy Holden, Senior Administration Officer

<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>	<b>Leighton-Linslade Town Council Three Year Plan: Objective 15:</b> to expand and consolidate opportunities for two-way dialogue with residents and ensure greater community engagement in, and awareness of, Town Council activity.	
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Human Resources</b>	X	None
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>	X	None
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	X	None
<b>Financial</b>	X	None

## 1. RECOMMENDATION/S

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

### 1.1 To note the report.

## 2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 As a publicly funded body, Leighton-Linslade Town Council has a duty to actively engage with the local community, providing information regarding its activities and proposed future projects, seeking feedback from residents and raising awareness of the Council and its remit within the Parish.
- 2.2 Historically, community engagement has taken place through a variety of forums including a printed newsletter, public consultation exercises, a website and community events.
- 2.3 More recently, following the rapid developments in technology and the advent of the Localism Agenda and e-Government, the Town Council has moved further towards electronic media, communicating with residents through channels including LLTC Website, Facebook, Twitter, Mailchimp, Survey Monkey, YouTube and its own app.

### 3. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

- 3.1 To ensure we have a clear direction and to help improve efficiency a communications work plan has been created (see **below**) and will be included in all future communications update reports. Overall, it is clear that a multi-faceted approach is needed and that the range of tools we use for communication is continuing to expand.
- 3.2 **Website:** in addition to recent changes to the homepage, a number of improvements have been made, including the addition of a town twinning page. Following input from the Sports Council, development of a Sports information page is underway.
- 3.3 **App:** this has been launched and promoted via About Town and social media.
- 3.4 **About Town:** the publication continues to go from strength to strength, with two paid advertisements in each edition to assist with print costs. A trial took place for the Sept/Oct edition in terms of outsourcing the design work. While the results have been good, this approach restricted our flexibility on content and timescales. For Nov/Dec we will continue to create the publication in-house.
- 3.5 **Electronic signage:** the electronic signage, part funded through the Market Towns Regeneration Fund, will provide another mechanism for communication to the public. This project is now at the stage of equipment purchase, IT needs analysis and negotiation with the landowners of the proposed sites.
- 3.6 **Social media “guardians”:** a recent report to the Partnership Committee highlighted the great success achieved by outsourcing the promotion of the Children’s Trail, primarily through social media, to a local “trail guardian”. This approach has provided dedicated marketing support and enabled a well-managed and pro-active campaign. It is anticipated that this will continue and that a similar arrangement may be established for the ongoing marketing of the street market.
- 3.7 **Hootsuite:** is currently used by officers to schedule social media posts. At the moment the free version is used, this allows up three profiles to be managed and offers limited analytics. The business version is £16.00 per month, allows up to 10 profiles and offers more in-depth reporting. For this reason it is our intention to upgrade to the business version.
- 3.8 **Branding:** LLTC branding guidelines were established in 2015 but are now in the process of being updated to incorporate all the new branding developed since that time, including Astral Park, TACTIC, the community events, children’s trail and street market branding. This will ensure that any parties promoting these assets will utilise the correct fonts, colours and branding messages in all marketing activity.

- 3.9 **Parks promotions:** while LLTC official channels include posts in respect of parks and open spaces, the Head of Grounds has taken on responsibility for managing additional social media profiles including one for Parson’s Close (amalgamating with a separate splash park page) and one for the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom. A significant amount of activity takes place during the annual “Love Parks” campaign.
- 3.10 **Consultation:** existing policies relating to consultation and community engagement are under review. In the meantime, consultation takes place through our website on a specific page in the “Your Council” section. At the time of writing, consultation is underway in respect of Town Council objectives for 2018-2021, as part of the work to develop the next three year plan.

#### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESSES

To further demonstrate the power of digital media, below are this year’s statistics from two events. There has been a large increase compared to last year’s figures. This is due to a successfully executed campaign using the newly introduced campaign trail work sheet designed to forward plan larger digital campaigns, and the introduction of events on Facebook.



##### Canal Festival

This campaign ran over four weeks with a total of 51 posts. As well as written content the posts includes images, videos and links to partners.

Engagement was encouraged from traders and visitors to the event with a record number actively engaging over social media.

Facebook Reach - 80,927

Twitter Impressions and engagements - 15,783

##### Big Lunch

Facebook Reach – 57,772

Twitter impressions and engagements – 10,898

A digital planner is used to forward plan all digital content, officers aim for social media posts to be scheduled on Hootsuite for the next four week

period. This promotes a proactive approach and allows time for officers from different service areas to inform of us of upcoming events and projects they are working on which need to be advertised.

A bank of evergreen posts is being worked on for posts that should periodically go out on our digital platforms. These include reminders of what we as a Council are responsible for, About Town, advertisement for TACTIC and Astral Park, to name a few. This helps saves time when content is low and ensures all service areas are being appropriately marketed.

We currently have 15,048 likes and followers across our 8 social media profiles.

The LLTC Official Facebook page gained on average of 2 likes per day between July-August

## **5. KPI UPDATE**

- 4.1 As part of the Town Council's Three Year Plan, key performance indicators were introduced to monitor success across our digital profiles. **Appendix A** shows performance to date and new figures set for 2017-18.
- 4.2 A factor in achieving targets has been our increased use of paid for and sponsored posts on Facebook. This has proven to be a very cost effective way to reach a large and targeted audience. We will also continue to create social media events for upcoming events, this has proved to encourage engagement and increase reach.
- 4.3 To drive more users to our website, links to relevant webpages on upcoming social media posts will continue to be included at every opportunity across all service areas.

## COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN

Projects	Objective	Update	Next steps
<p>Website  <a href="http://www.leightonlinlade-tc.gov.uk">www.leightonlinlade-tc.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Continued development of the LLTC website, aspirations to include online payments and creation of a style guide.</p>	<p>Improvements were made to the homepage in May 2017. This included design changes which incorporated buttons to our most visited pages and a latest news section.</p>	<p>It is our aim to create a development plan for the website for the next year and onwards. This will include the main website all bolt on minisites. A style guide for each site will also be created to ensure a consistent approach to all future amendments.</p>
<p>Market mini site            (will have own domain  <a href="http://www.leightonbuzzardmarket.co.uk">www.leightonbuzzardmarket.co.uk</a>)</p>	<p>As part of the market relaunch project it was decided that a minisite would be created. It was negotiated that an existing domain owned by an outside party would come under Town Council ownership.</p>	<p>Working alongside a web designer a 9 page minisite has been created and was approved by committee on 10<sup>th</sup> September.</p>	<p>Once final changes are made it is anticipated the website will launch w/c 11/09/17 in line with the market relaunch event.</p>
<p>Astral Park mini site  <a href="http://www.astralpark.co.uk">www.astralpark.co.uk</a></p>	<p>To better reflect Astral Park's branding, provide key information for those searching online for a facility to host their activity, event, meeting or function.</p>	<p>The site was launched in May 2017. Now the site has had some time live, it will be assessed to pinpoint any needed improvements and performance will be monitored.</p>	<p>A meeting is scheduled to reflect on how the site is working so far and discuss any required improvements and amendments.</p>

<p>TACTIC mini site  <a href="http://www.tactic.co.uk">www.tactic.co.uk</a></p>	<p>TACTIC's minisite was launched at the same time as the main LLTC website. It was decided a minisite would be created as the target audience is of a younger age.</p>	<p>Since the site launched there haven't been any design or function changes.</p>	<p>After a discussion with the senior administrative officer the team have decided to have a meeting to discuss possible updates. Once their direction is clearer the process to implement changes can begin.</p>
<p>Google Analytics Dashboard</p>	<p>To create a personalised dashboard on our Google Analytics account. To include links to all required information relating to all sites.</p>	<p>A discussion has been had with our current web provider to see if this is something they can help with.</p>	<p>Awaiting confirmation from current web provider. If this is not something they can help with, the opportunity will be offered to alternative providers using a specification outlining our requirements.</p>
<p>Town Council App</p>	<p>To provide key information in a mobile friendly, easy to use format, including being able to send our subscribers 'Push Notifications' (instant alerts).</p>	<p>The LLTC app was launched at the end of July 2017. It has been advertised on the About Town Newsletter and a marketing campaign is planned to help build interest.</p>	<p>Updating of the app will now be built into the communications strategy.</p>
<p>Social Media paid for/sponsored posts</p>	<p>Sponsored (paid for) posts have been lightly tested by Astral Park and recent job vacancies. The aim behind this was to extend our reach and target desired audiences.</p>	<p>Results from paid for posts have been good, we saw a clear increase in job applications who found the roles via social media. We were able to reach 8,956 people with 534 engagements</p>	<p>Now the success of paid for posts is clear, we aim to build this into our larger communications strategy.</p>

		by spending only £23.00 on our latest vacancy.	
Branded banners	To raise awareness of Town Council achievements, initiatives and events	12 banners in total beginning have been erected at Lake Street and Leston Road with most positioned along West Street and Leighton Road. The banners highlight the Town's markets, our Green Flag status, TACTIC, Astral Park and Events.	The core banners will remain in place at all times with the banners relating to specific events being erected on rotation.
Instagram account	Instagram is the number one fastest-growing social media network with 500 million users. It could also be a very effective method to communicate with a younger audience, as 41% of its users are aged 18-24 and 30% of its users are aged 25-34	On hold until a clear direction on how best to manage the account is decided	
Communication strategy	Due to the progression in the use of digital communication tools we feel now is the time to consider introducing a communications strategy. This will ensure we have a clear direction and processes for staff members to follow to ensure all departments are working towards the same goal.	The first draft of the Communications Strategy is currently being worked on, it is anticipated that it will be taken to the in-house communications meeting for input from interested officers.	Once the first draft has received feedback and amendments are made it will be presented at Committee for ratification and implemented in-house.

# COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN