



Date: 26 February 2017

Title: Communications Update

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

Contact Officer: Amy Holden, Senior Administration Officer

Corporate Objective/s	Leighton-Linslade Town Council Three Year Plan: Objective 15: to expand and consolidate opportunities for two-way dialogue with residents and ensure greater community engagement in, and awareness of, Town Council activity.	
Implications:		
Human Resources	X	None
Operational/Service delivery	X	None
Procedural/Legal	X	None
Financial	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:** following approval by committee to appoint an alternative provider to host and support the four Town Council websites, work is underway to transition from our previous provider to the new agency. A briefing meeting was held on Friday 2nd February and the next steps agreed. The new provider will be in place as planned by the end of the current contract end date, Monday 16th February 2018.

It is still our intention to have a “settling in period” (to be agreed with the new provider) before looking to re-design or further develop the websites. This allows time for a development plan for each site to be created before being actioned.

However it has been agreed that some changes will be made almost immediately which include:

- updating processes to ensure we are in line with GDPR guidelines
- review Google Analytics plugs ins, agree on data to be captured, data dashboard to be created
- redesign of main event pages, The Big Lunch, Canal Festival and The Christmas Weekend to better reflect branding
- introduction of calendar function
- design refresh to the TACTIC site

3.3 **App:** the LLTC app now has 150 active downloads and continues to be promoted via About Town and social media. Recent improvements include the creation of photo galleries and the use of push notifications. Push notifications will only be used to promote upcoming events and to alert users of important LLTC news.

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. Following a trial (outsourcing the publication), it has decided that going forward the design will continue to be completed 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. A sim provider has been found and work is underway to decide on our internal management process. Location of the signs is now confirmed as below:

- Train Station – likely to be the first installed, Railway Services to lead on installation.
- West Street (entrance to Waitrose) – CBC have requested we use its highway service to install. Discussion on dates still taking place, we are dependent on their installation timetable.
- On A505 by-pass between Grovebury Road and Billington Road – to be installed by CBC highways service.

3.6 **Hootsuite:** is used by officers to schedule social media posts to all profiles including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Since the previous communications update, the profile has been upgraded to a business account which provides more in-depth analytics and allows for scheduling on up to 10 profiles.

3.7 **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.

3.8 **Internal Processes:** As well as use of a digital content planner, an internal communications process is being worked on. This will provide a clear method for officers to follow to ensure key messages are getting out there in a pre-planned, organised manner.

It will ensure each team is working simultaneously to improve project communication lead times,

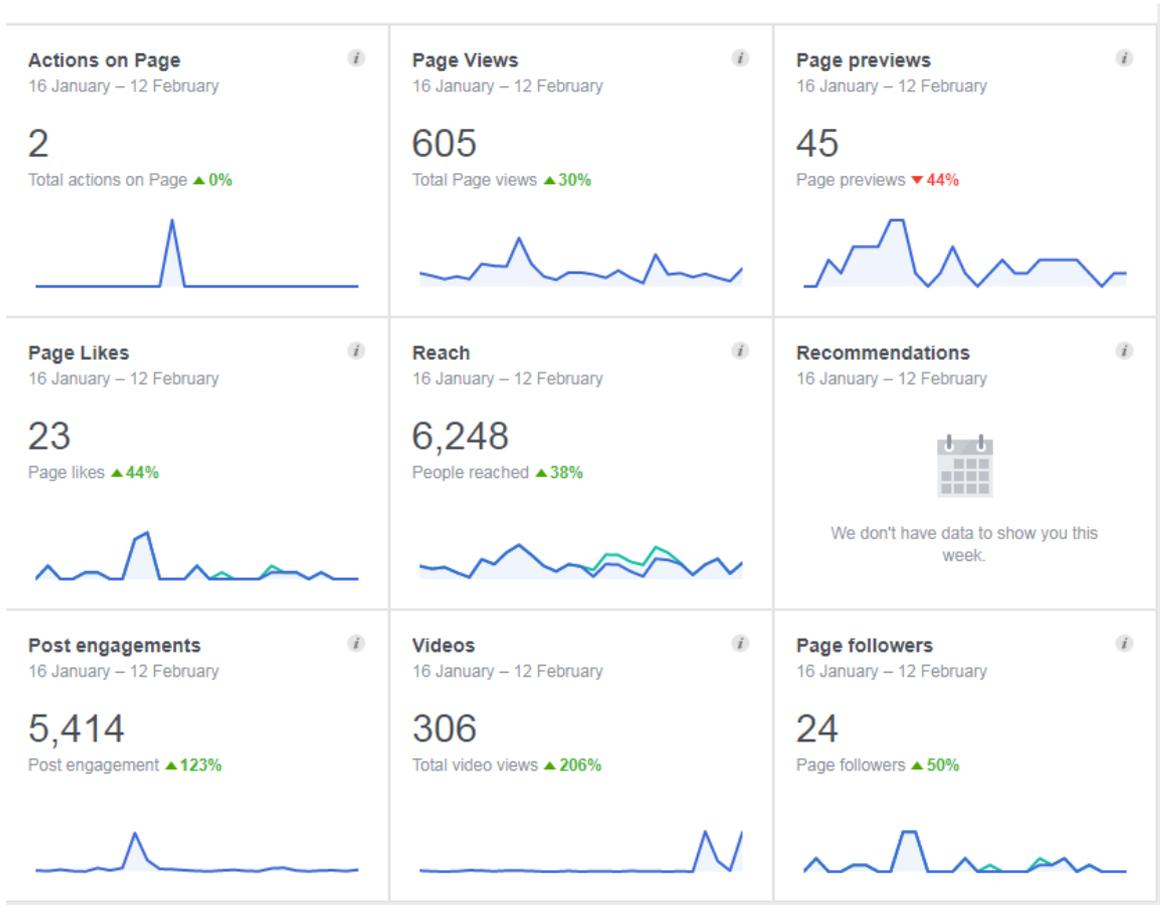
4. SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE AND SUCCESSES

4.1 **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.

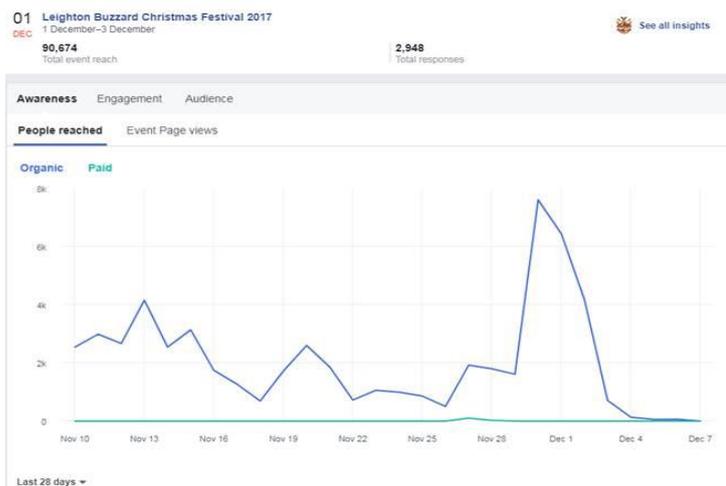
It was decided that we would launch our Instagram account in line with the Christmas Weekend. We currently have 145 followers. Instagram is based on image sharing therefore a different approach will be taken to manage this compared to our other social media profiles.

4.2 The below statistics show a monthly snapshot of analytics taken from the main LLTC News Facebook page. As you can see page engagement is up by 123% which lets us know that people are not only reading our content but also actively engaging.

The page continues to gain an average of 1 like per day.



4.3 The campaign for The Christmas Festival 2017 was one of our most successful yet with Facebook promotions alone (including event, post, videos and live streaming) reaching over 90,000 people and 3000 directly responding and engaging.



It is a great example of what a well planned and executed campaign can achieve.

On a number of occasions a voucher that can be spent on the market has been offered as an incentive for feedback for events. This worked particularly well with over 100 feedback submissions for The Christmas Festival Weekend.

COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN

Projects	Objective	Update	Next steps
<p>Website www.leightonlinlade-tc.gov.uk</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 www.leightonbuzzardmarket.co.uk)</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>As planned the LB Market website was launched on 11/09/17 in line with the market relaunch event. Since launch the site has received positive feedback.</p>	<p>Developments to the trader section of the website are in planning stages and will be implemented when the new website provider is in place from 26/02/17.</p>
<p>Astral Park mini site www.astralpark.co.uk</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 www.tactic-centre.co.uk</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. It is</p>	<p>Following a discussion with the senior administrative Officer, the TACTIC team are giving consideration to creating a working group with officers and stakeholders to better determine the direction</p>
<p>Google Analytics Dashboard</p>	<p>To create a personalised dashboard on our Google Analytics account to help monitor visitor and download stats</p>	<p>Creation and implementation planned once the new provider is in place – to be included in the general support SLA</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 app now has 150 active users. Recent work includes adding image galleries and beginning to use the push notifications function.</p>	<p>Continue to build followers by promoting the app via social media and LLTC website.</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 are were able to reach 8,956 people with 534 engagements by spending only £23.00 on our latest vacancy.</p>	<p>Now the success of paid for posts is clear, we aim to build this into our larger communications strategy.</p>

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.	After some consideration it was decided that the strategy would work better as two documents. A community engagement strategy and an in-house communications process.	The draft Community Engagement Strategy is appended to this agenda item.
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COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN