

Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 27 February 2023

Title: Six Monthly Communications Update

Purpose of the Report: To provide Committee with a six-monthly update in respect of Town Council Communications.

Contact Officers: Amy Holden, Senior Administration Officer
Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s	Leighton-Linslade Town Council Five Year Plan: Objective #1: to regularly review how we communicate and seek to embrace new technologies.
Implications:	
Human Resources	None
Operational/Service delivery	None
Procedural/Legal	None
Financial	None
Equalities	Duty to comply with Equalities Act 2010 and Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) Regulations 2018
Environmental	Reduced reliance on paper communications in line with Council's climate change declaration & environmental ambitions

1. RECOMMENDATION

Should Members be minded, the proposal is:

- 1.1 To note the information regarding Town Council communications.**

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** Regular community engagement takes place through a variety of platforms including a printed newsletter, email campaigns, public

consultation exercises, websites, social media platforms, Apps, market stalls and community events. The Council's Community Engagement Strategy 2018 sets out our intention to use a wide variety of communications mechanisms:



- 2.3 In line with the Localism Agenda, e-Government and rapid developments in technology, the Town Council continues to increase its investment in electronic media, using multiple channels to continue to engage as widely as it can with the community.
- 2.4 We continue to develop our communications using the LLTC Website, Market Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Mailerlite, Survey Monkey, YouTube and the LLTC app, to make information accessible to all.
- 2.5 Our ongoing commitment to ensure we still maintain print-based communication channels for those without online access continues to be valued by those residents preferring paper copies of documents.

3. WEBSITE

- 3.1. The LLTC website continues to be cited as an exemplar in the parish council sector, not least in terms of compliance with the accessibility regulations required of public sector bodies.
- 3.2. Some time has been spent building online digital forms, for tasks such as allotment sign up, grant applications and this year all LLTC events sign ups. The form builder now allows for documents to be attached by the user which will help streamline processes, save on officer's time, and offer a straightforward approach.
- 3.3 A new page has been created in the Community section of the website titled Advice, Support and Wellbeing. It includes information about local services such as the community fridge, community agent and helpful contacts.

- 3.4 Work is underway to build pages currently supported by the mod.gov platform, in preparation for the upcoming change in provider used for the Council's agenda/minutes creation.
- 3.5 There are plans to update the Trails section of the website, to improve promotion of the Living History Trail, The Children's Trail and the upcoming Sands of time Trail.

Branding for Buzzard Trails will also be audited and streamlined to ensure all upcoming trails can fit easily within the brand.

4 TOWN COUNCIL APPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The LLTC app continues to be promoted via About Town, social media, and the website. Current downloads are 608.
- 4.2 We hope to make better use of the push notification function, as part of the larger communications strategy project.
- 4.3 Work is nearly complete on the new Sands of Trail app, and it will soon be added to the Buzzard Trails app alongside the Living History Trail and the Children's Trail.


5 ELECTRONIC SIGNAGE

- 5.1 We continue to share topical messages via the four electronic signage boards. A copy of these messages is included within the weekly newsletter to Members. We have asked CBC to check the electrical supply to the Hockliffe Road sign and this is confirmed to be working, so we now await more detailed investigations on why the sign is faulty.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 6.1 Along with our website, social media continues to be an invaluable tool in communicating vital information.
- 6.2 We have recently commissioned Breakthrough Communications to help create a social media strategy for 2023. A workshop was held with a large officer group in early January to talk through what we hope to achieve, how effective communications are and our strengths/areas for improvement.
- 6.3 It was heartening to hear the consultants praise our social media content but of course, there is always room for development and improvement. The 2023 strategy is likely to include increased use of video, ways to encourage greater interaction/engagement and a focus on tone of voice – humanising the council.

6.4 Breakthrough also offers a service called the Council Hive which we have taken advantage of. This online portal provides us with access to hints and tips, templates, “how to” videos and masterclasses. Several officers recently attended a masterclass on community engagement which gave us 6 key tips to take away and progress further.

6.5  Officers continue to use Hootsuite to plan and schedule messages, as well as managing direct message responses.

In the past year, 3.4 thousand posts have been scheduled.

7. ANALYTICS

Websites:

7.1 Website analytic reports continue to be sent to us with a breakdown summary from our website provider to see what users of the sites are visiting the site for.

7.2 An analysis of the reports for 2022 shows that the Events page is most visited, appearing in the “top ten” visited pages consistently every month (regardless of whether an event is taking place that month, or not). Other most visited web pages include:

- Contact us
- Parson’s Close recreation ground
- TACTIC
- Venues
- Meetings
- Parks

Of the individual events pages, Linslade Canal Festival was most visited.

7.3 On average we receive approximately 4,000 visitors to the website each month. This displays in patterns dependent on month and what is happening. Generally, the summer months and Christmas time drive the most traffic to the website.

Social Media:

7.4 We currently have 27,752 followers across our all our Social Media Profiles. This represents a continued steady rise of 1,778 since our last communications update.

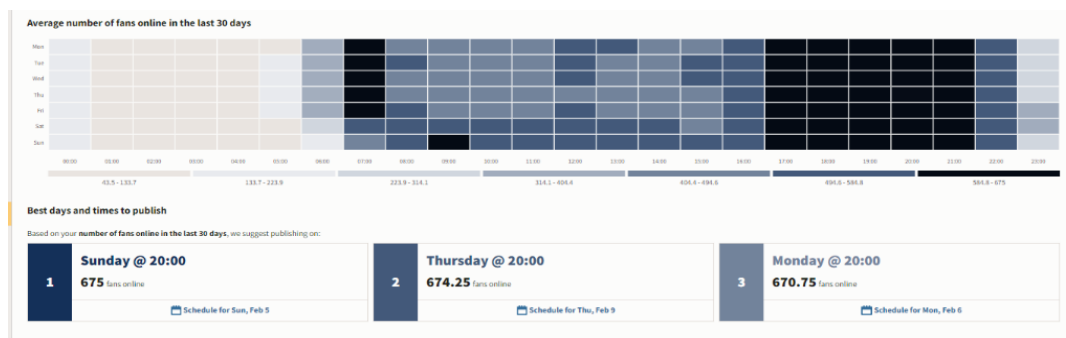
The platform with the most followers overall is Facebook. Reasons include the multiple pages we have as well as it being the social media platform we have used for the longest time.

- 7.5 YouTube subscribers have organically grown to 326.
- 7.6 179 posts were posted across all platforms during the month of January 2023.
- 7.7 Through closer monitoring of how the posts we put out are performing, we know that feel good/celebration posts are always well received. As are posts relating to positive changes made to our assets, such as park and green space improvements and community-based projects.

Based on these findings, officers aim to tweak future posts to ensure a variety of different posts and topics are covered and encourage engagement.

Posts which ask the user to perform an action, such as click this link, give us your feedback etc help also to improve engagement and therefore reach more people.

- 7.8 A new feature on Hootsuite is analysing when your followers are online , enabling suggestions on what the best time to post is. Example below:



8 BRANDING

- 8.1 A branding guideline review is scheduled into the communications workplan as inconsistencies still exist across use of the LLTC brand palette.
- 8.2 Work has recently been completed to update our printed stationery to better reflect the progression in our branding. The new stationery will be professionally printed imminently.

9 NEWSLETTERS

- 9.1 A town centre business newsletter (started as part of the post-Covid “Welcome Back” campaign) has continued to be emailed on a monthly basis. Officers are currently reviewing options for taking this forward.
- 9.2 It is anticipated that a review of the About Town community newsletter (format, frequency, delivery method) will be undertaken during 2023 with findings and recommendations reported back to the Cultural & Economic Committee.

SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES:

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
1 Feb · 🌐

Street party road closures for the Coronation... See more

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
4 d · 🌐

The Town Council is pleased to support the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, and last year, we invited you to cre... See more

7

Like Comment Share

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
2 Feb · 🌐

Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. Happening every year, it's a day for friends... See more

#TimeToTalk

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
6 d · 🌐

This year's Civic Service takes place on Sunday, 26 February, at 15:00 hours at All Saints Church and provides us ... See more

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
5 d · 🌐

So, you think you may be interested in becoming a Town Councillor?... See more

So, you think you may be interested in becoming a Town Councillor?

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Official
3 h · 🌐

Do you know? We look after over 60 hectares of public open space across #LeightonLinslade

Most of the work is undertaken by our in-house grounds team, who not only cut the grass and collect the litter, but can turn their hands to install new features, such as the mushroom seats installed into the award-winning #PagesPark, to cleaning our play area safer surfacing.