



# Crediton Town Council

## Communications and Engagement Strategy

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**BREAKTHROUGH  
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SPECIALISTS IN CONNECTING TOWN & PARISH  
COUNCILS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES



**CREDITON  
TOWN COUNCIL**

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*The cover photograph was taken from Crediton Town Council's Facebook Page.*

# Section 1: Background

## Purpose of the Strategy

The goal of the Communications and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) is to provide a broad strategic framework for Crediton Town Council ('the Council' or 'Town Council') to develop and enhance its external communications.

The Strategy is a living document. It should be reviewed regularly and updated. This will help to ensure that it assists the Council in meeting new challenges.

The Strategy's aims are to support and assist the Council to:

- Take a more strategic and proactive approach
- Achieve its overarching objectives
- Develop a clear identity with distinctive messages
- More effectively engage with the community it represents
- Develop new communications channels and strengthen existing ones

A proposed work plan has been provided at Appendix A.

The results of a survey and notes from a workshop session have been provided in a separate document (Appendix B).

## The Town of Crediton

Crediton is situated to the north west of Exeter in Devon. It is in the valley of the River Creedy. The town is occasionally called 'Kirton' with locals referring to themselves as 'Kirtonians'. At the time of the 2021 Census the population was estimated to be 8,070. This was higher than the 2001 Census when the population was 6,837.

The modern Civil Parish is in Mid Devon District Council. It covers the whole of the urban area that makes up the town. It also extends to the south taking in some countryside. The train station is to the south and set slightly apart from the main settlement.

Crediton is a focal point for several communities that surround it. This would include Civil Parishes such as Shobrooke, Crediton Hamlets and Sandford. Crediton is therefore the principal market town for around 22,000 people.

Crediton has a long history. Its name is thought to derive from 'Cridiantune' meaning 'Farmstead on the River Creedy'. It is thought that Saint Boniface (Winfrith) was born in the town. A See

was established in the early 900s. In 1050 it was transferred to Exeter. In 1086 the settlement was mentioned in the Domesday survey.

During the medieval period the market town developed a strong wool trade industry. In more modern times Crediton had a diverse range of industries. This included shoemaking, leatherwork, agriculture, dairy, tinplating and the manufacture of sweets and drinks.

The town still has some limited industry in addition to shops, pubs, and restaurants. There are regular markets and events in the town as well as a lively arts scene.

Being close to both Dartmoor and Exmoor the town enjoys high visitor numbers. Having both a railway station and being situated on an A-road makes the town accessible. Leisure pursuits such as golfing, fishing, riding and outdoor activities are catered for.

Historical buildings of interest in the area include Crediton Parish Church and The Downes, the house where Redvers Buller was born.

In addition to the Town Council's facilities Crediton also has services provided by other public authorities. It has several primary schools and a secondary school. There is also Crediton Hospital, which is a community hospital.

## The Town Council

Crediton Town Council has 12 councillors divided into two wards. There are six councillors in Boniface Ward and a further six in Lawrence Ward.

As is common with other town councils the Chair of the Council is styled as the Mayor. They represent the Town Council at civic events and functions.

There are four standing committees of the Council: Town Strategy & Planning; Council Affairs & Finance; Community & Environment and Climate Emergency. There are a further three sub-committees: Grants; Parish Paths and Christmas in Crediton. The [Terms of Reference](#) for the committees and sub-committees are available on the Council's website.

The Council undertakes the core functions of a local council, for instance, as a statutory planning consultee and representing community views. In addition, it is also responsible for a wide range of other services and functions. For example:

- Three allotment sites
- The War Memorial, St Boniface Statue and Millenium Cross
- The Bandstand and Newcombes Meadow
- Public conveniences
- People's Park and play areas
- Old Landscore School and Council Offices
- CCTV

- Town Clock
- Grant funding
- Floral competition
- Support or management of events
- Campaigns or activities. For example, the Redvers Ramble and Keep Crediton Clean

The Council employs 8 members of staff and a number of peer mentors. The Town Clerk is the most senior officer and is also the Responsible Financial Officer.

The precept for the 2023/24 financial year is £450,000 with an anticipated total income of £467,220. The precept therefore makes up the bulk of the Council's income.

## Relevant Council policies

The Council has many policies which impact on its external communications:

- Communications and media policy
- GDPR policies and procedures
- Protocol on Member and officer relations
- Volunteer policy
- Community engagement strategy
- Social media and electronic communication policy
- Complaints procedure
- Community grant policy

The considerable body of policies is not unusual for a large town council. However, there is probably scope for some degree of review and rationalisation.

For instance, social media is covered in both the Communications and Media and the Social Media and Electronic Communication Policies. The Community Engagement Strategy is a very useful document which could be reviewed, made more accessible and publicised widely.

The Council has developed a Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. It is a comparatively concise and easy to follow document. It is quite refreshing to read such a clear strategic plan. It sets out the 'core aims' along with review details. The 'core aims' identified in the document are:

### 1. Managing development

- Finalise the Neighbourhood Plan for Crediton
- Ensure that Crediton Town Council plays an active role in planning decisions
- Improve areas within the control of Crediton Town Council
- Encourage sustainable development where possible, as a commitment to the Climate Emergency

- Engage with the Local Planning Authority on the allocation of developer contributions to appropriate projects in the town
- Work with our partners to make CREDITON a connected town, with cycle route provision being a high priority

## **2. Providing Services**

- Consider the value to the community and financial implications of taking on devolved services from Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council to ensure the retention, as far as possible, of services such as grass verge cutting and seasonal bedding
- Work towards our open spaces being accessible to all
- Continue to provide allotments on the three council-owned sites
- To ensure that we offer good value for money when providing services, facilities and open spaces
- To provide and maintain a public realm CCTV system

## **3. Building Relationships**

- Offer strong leadership
- Continue to provide community grants to groups and organisations, to enhance the health, wellbeing, and future of CREDITON
- Maintain and develop our relationships with partners, community groups and organisations and create multi channel communication
- Provide excellent service at all times
- Work always within legislation and best practice

## **4. Promoting CREDITON**

- Encourage and work with partnership organisations in organising community events and projects that attract visitors
- Develop the successful Christmas in CREDITON and Floral CREDITON events
- Ensure the preservation of the town's historic assets
- Support local businesses, where possible, to safeguard the High Street
- Provide good quality, accessible public conveniences and attractive open spaces
- Continue town maintenance services, taking pride in where we live

## **5. Strengthening our community**

- Address the Climate Emergency through emerging policy and practical changes in how we deliver services, carry out maintenance of public spaces and organise our own administration
- Maintain financial support and management to the provision of youth work
- Work collaboratively with existing groups and stakeholders to promote the character and importance of our town
- To raise our standards by participating in accredited award schemes

# Section 2: Review of current communications

This section will review the Council's current external communications. It is important that the Council can identify what is working, as well as what is not. There is also a need to identify where there is scope for improvement.

## Identity and branding



The Council has a core identity and brand, that of 'Credition Town Council'.

The Council has a logo which takes the form of an oval. The logo is presumably a digital recreation of the seal used in 1469. In the border are the words 'The selle of the borowe town of Credyton.' In the centre of the logo is the figure of a Bishop or Archbishop on a field of red. The figure is making the Hand of Benediction gesture and holding a crosier. The digits '14' and '69' are either side of the figure. The figure is wearing vestments of blue, white, and yellow.

The logo is clear and impactful. An unintended 'side effect' of the design is that it works surprisingly well across a range of media. For instance, on a newsletter, noticeboard or as a social media profile picture.

However, it is not entirely clear that it is the Town Council's logo. The 'seal design' is used by other organisations in the town. It could easily be mistaken for a church logo. Unfortunately, on some occasions when the Council's name appears it is next to that of another local authority.

A recent addition has been the words 'Credition Town Council' in a *sans serif* font.

Beyond the logo the Council has limited formal branding in place. What is in place has been developed largely through organic processes. For instance, there is some consistency of colour on the website which is taken from the logo. There is also some consistency in relation to typography where the same font is used.

There has been some attempt at creating consistent messaging. For instance, the Strategic Plan speaks to this. However, there appears to be an appreciation of the fact that a more strategic, consistent and clear approach is required.

## Sub-brands

The Council has a surprisingly large number of what could best be described as sub-brands. There is no 'brand family' this is where an organisation creates different logos with a similar theme. For instance, the BBC or Virgin. The word 'sub-brand' has been used because they sit below the core brand of the Council.

The sub-brands have been created in a largely ad hoc fashion to meet specific needs. Each has been developed to varying degrees. Crediton Youth Service appears to be the most developed. Crediton Warm Spaces is the least developed.

There are issues with having many sub-brands. It requires a clear strategic approach and additional resources to manage. The Youth Service sub-brand might be as well developed as it is because it has a specific team dedicated to working for it.

An additional issue with the high number of sub-brands is that the Council's principal identity can get 'lost'. It is not always obvious that the Town Council is directly responsible for them.

### Keep Crediton Clean Campaign



The sub-brand is associated with a public information campaign aimed at the reduction of littering and dog fouling in the town. [The page on the Council's website](#) has a leaflet and several posters. Presumably the leaflet was distributed along with the posters.

There is a logo in the form of a roundel. In the centre of the roundel there is a stick figure dropping waste in a bin. The words 'Keep Crediton Clean Campaign' are around the edge in a sans serif font. The colouring of the lettering and the background do not contrast well.

The Town Council's address is on the leaflet. However, it is next to a link to the Devon County Council website. On the posters the Town Council's name appears on them, but it is 'hidden' at the bottom.



## Crediton Warm Spaces

This was presumably a recently created sub-brand in response to the surge in energy prices. [A website page](#) sets out the basics of the initiative and provides information about the Town Council's role. On the website page there is a poster.

There is no distinct branding on the poster, and it does not obviously tie in the Council's logo. Only the Council's website address hints at the organisations coordinating role.

## Redvers Ramble and other walks



This 'niche' sub-brand is used on the website and leaflets associated with walking. The brand is in essence a logo in the form of a footpath signpost with the words 'Redvers Ramble & other walks' on it.

It is undeveloped and does not seem to have been altered since its creation in 2016. The signpost is red and therefore has some continuity with the Council's logo colours.

The ['Redvers Ramble and other walks' leaflet](#) highlights well the wider issues with the Council's sub-branding. On the leaflet the Town Council and its logo is on the last page. It is mentioned alongside the County Council.

## Crediton Youth Service



The most developed sub-brand which appears across many of the Council's communications. Regardless of the communication channel used the service offer is clear and distinctive.

The sub-brand has a [separate page on the Council's website](#). It also appears on several of the newsletters. This will hopefully contribute to the number of those taking up the service offer.

The reason for its development is clearly so that it appeals to younger people (and presumably their parents) who are the 'target group' for the service.

Unlike many of the other sub-brands the connection with the Town Council is clear. The Council's logo often appears alongside the Youth Service logo.

The Crediton Youth Service logo is clear and distinctive. It can be easily and effectively used across a variety of media. The only slight issue with the sub-brand is that it is focused on the 'Youth Club'. [The Council's website](#) states that the service is more than that:

"Detached youth work: Not all young people want to come to our youth club and so our detached youth work team meet young people where they are, on the streets and in the park, offering conversation, activities and support."

The Youth Service has a separate [Facebook Page](#) with 140 followers and an [Instagram](#) account with 89 followers. Both appear to generate appropriate content about once or twice a week. However, there is a limited use of video content.

Despite the brand being clear some consideration might need to be given to reach. The main Facebook Page of the Council has a much larger following. Consideration should be given as to how the sub-brand could grow or greater use made of the other communication channels to promote it.

## Christmas in Crediton



The sub-brand is linked to specific events which take place in the run-up to Christmas. There is no specific logo. The colour scheme used is of winter festival colours (green and yellow) and the Town Council's logo is prominent on the [Facebook Page](#).

The sub-brand seems to be used exclusively on Facebook and Instagram. The Facebook Page has a following of 1.7k, which is impressive. The Instagram account has only 51 followers. The sub-brand does not seem to appear explicitly on either the Council's website or in newsletters.

There is no issue with having such a sub-brand. However, it is not clear why it has been created or how it adds to the Council's communications mix. For example, the sub-brand's Facebook only generates significant amounts of content for a few months of the year. None of the content on the sub-brand Facebook Page would look out of place on the Council's main one.

## Human resources and budgets

Limited human and financial resources were identified as issues during both the pre-workshop survey and workshop. The key problems identified were the volume of projects, limited time, and a lack of long-term focus.

Currently there is no dedicated human resource for communications. This is not unusual for the parish and town council sector as whole. However, the larger the local council the more likely it is that it would need or have dedicated communication human resources.

No single committee or sub-committee appears to have a specific remit for communications. In the governance structure there are three or four committees and sub-committees that could provide strategic oversight.

It appears from the workshop session that no single member of staff is responsible for communications. The Town Clerk presumably has overall responsibility. However, on a day-to-day basis the postholder lacks the time to undertake additional communications work.

There is no single line or cost centre in the 2023/24 budget for communications. There are several budget lines in the 'Office Administration' cost centre that are related to communications. In addition to the above some of the lines in the 'Floral Crediton' and 'Christmas in Crediton' would support external communications. Elements of the 'Youth Work' and 'Annual Grants' lines in the 'Additional Services' cost centre will also be relevant.

Because it is not clear how some lines relate to external communications no specific figure can be given. However, it is likely the Town Council spends tens of thousands of pounds on communications in any given financial year.

The lack of a strategic, long-term, and properly resourced approach makes it more likely that the Council will adopt a 'firefighting', reactive and ad hoc stance to communications.

On a more positive note, both staff and councillors are supportive of trying new things and improving the Council's communications. There is a desire to ensure that the Council is seen to be: playing a key role, providing value for money, and reaching out to the whole community.

## Tone of voice

The Council has organically developed a tone of voice which is consistently used across its communications. It's current 'default' tone of voice was described during the workshop as:

- Dry
- Professional
- Official

This is not uncommon for parish and town councils. It is seen as being 'risk free'. It is also what staff and councillors use most frequently to communicate internally. However, the downside of such an approach is that communications are all too often:

- Inaccessible
- Uninteresting to most people
- Overlooked

A formal tone of voice is appropriate for certain communications channels and in some contexts. However, in many situations, it could work against the Council. It is also unlikely that it will support the Council in engaging with 'hard to reach' groups.

From the workshop it appears that the Council would like to develop a different tone of voice for external communications. This would be one that is more:

- Engaging
- Proactive
- Relevant
- Likely to celebrate success and achievements
- Informal but not inappropriate

## Communication channels

### Council noticeboards

The Council makes use of a noticeboard. Formal notices and some public information is displayed. The use appears to be similar to other town and parish councils.

#### What could be improved

- **Market Place noticeboard:** The idea of having a noticeboard in the Market Place was raised both in the pre-workshop survey.

### Community noticeboards

The Council seems to be making some use of community notice boards in community centres, shops, etc. During the workshop the matter was discussed and there was general consensus that more could be done.

#### What could be improved

- **Greater use of community noticeboards:** Having posters and information in community notice boards is one comparatively quick and easy way for the Council to reach a wider audience. It is likely that audiences which make little, or no use of the internet will in particular benefit from this.

- **Create a list of community noticeboards:** The Council should have a list of community noticeboards it can use. This will help it to plan its communications and ensure as many people as possible receive key messages and information.

## Signage

It was mentioned in the workshop that the Council has an inconsistent approach to signage. This most likely stems from the lack of a strategic approach to communications, having too many ongoing projects, and multiple sub-brands.

For instance, it was mentioned during the workshop that the logo has been used without the words 'Crediton Town Council' on signage. Those who did not know it is the Council's logo might have been unclear about the Council's involvement.

It was also mentioned during the workshop that the Council makes limited or no effort to get those receiving grants from it to publicly acknowledge the funding received. It would not be onerous for acknowledgment in the form of social media post or a sign in a facility.

### What could be improved

- **Review of signage and the development of a plan:** The Council should undertake a review of signage. Once the review is complete the Council should develop a plan to have clear and consistent signage on the sites it owns and services it manages.
- **Grant funding:** Those who receive grant funding from the Council should clearly acknowledge the funding

## The Council's website

There was a high degree of recognition of the website as a communications channel. Many officers and members had engaged with the website and were familiar with it.

The website should act as the focal point for the Council's communications. It should be the place that brings together all key information and integrates the various communication channels the Council has.

### What's currently working well

- The website contains a considerable amount of information about the Council's services and functions
- The use of some imagery adds to the user experience of the website
- Would appear to meet the requirements of the Transparency Code
- The 'Contact Us' page on the website is clear and easy to find
- Key services and some messages are reinforced by having dedicated pages (for instance Youth Work and Climate Emergency)
- Clear contact details
- Use of branding

- Council's logo and name appears prominently
- Navigation is overall easy and coherent

### What can be improved

- **Setting out a clearer identity:** The description of the Council and its functions are useful. However, it could be in plainer English. The Council should also set out clearly what it is not responsible for. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' section and A-Z service guide might be useful.
- **News and events:** The page is focused primarily on newsletters. There are only a handful of articles and links to external news. More could be made of the page.
- **Navigation:** The addition of a site map and search function would be useful.
- **Information:** Information is not always easy to find. For instance, plans and policies are spread out over multiple website pages. The Youth Work service is spread out over 5 different pages, and it is not obvious why. Some content is quite old and could do to be reviewed. For instance, the Clean-up Crediton and Redvers Rambles pages.
- **Integration between the website and social media:** The homepage has a widget for the Town Council's Facebook Page. None of the other social media appears to be mentioned. There are no social media buttons at the top of the page. There appears to be no mention of the Youth Service's social media on the dedicated website page.
- **Call to Actions (CTAs) up front:** It is important to get across key messages and calls to action as one of the first things that visitors see when they visit the website. This could for instance be a CTA to sign up to take part in a survey. The Council should give more thought as to how to make its CTAs clearer and more prominent.
- **Accessibility:** A basic accessibility check was done on the website. A few minor issues were found. The Council might wish to consider having a more regular check for accessibility issues. The accessibility statement does not appear to have been reviewed since August 2020. The Council might also wish to consider if it could use fewer PDF documents and increase the amount of information in HTML format.

## Social media

On 9 August 2023 a simple benchmarking exercise was carried out on the Council's social media account.

The goal was to ascertain how the Council is performing in relation to other councils. The number of social media followers was compared to other councils with a similar precept.

Where possible local councils geographically close by or with similar characteristics were selected. This was done because followers are more likely to receive content, assuming paid adverts are not heavily used.

The exercise was conducted using the Council's principal Facebook Page. Figures for the sub-brands have been provided in the Brand and Identity section of this Strategy.

## Results of the social media benchmarking exercise (9 August 2023)

Social Media Channel	Crediton TC	Ventnor TC (Isle of White)	Honiton TC (East Devon)	Hornsea TC (East Riding of Yorks)	St Agnes PC (Isle of White)
Facebook	1.2k	252	751	1.3k	1k
X (Twitter)	374	N/A	183	86	107
Instagram	84	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
YouTube	N/A	60	N/A	N/A	1
LinkedIn	N/A	N/A	29	N/A	0

The Council's use of social media channels is broadly in line with similar-sized councils.

It has the highest number of X (Twitter) followers. However, the account is effectively dormant with no posts since 20 January 2023. It was noted that for the similar local councils above X was also either dormant or underutilised.

Several of the other local councils were using additional social media. However, it was either being used in a 'holding capacity' to give the Council presence on that social media platform or it was dormant.

In reference to Facebook followers, the Council sits at the higher end of the table. The setup of the Facebook Page is good. Content is regular and varied. Except for meetings there is limited use of video.

There is a lot of sharing from other local authorities. There is limited development of two-way conversations (answering questions, sharing info, etc). Some effort is made to make the tone more accessible and less official.

Not all posts have been looked at as part of the review. However, a lot appear to go out during the middle of the day or late afternoon, which is unlikely to be the time that people will be using social media. More use could be made of a scheduling tool, such as the one in the Meta Business Suite.

## What could be improved

- **Consistency of messages relating to goals and priorities:** The Council should take a more strategic approach and put its key messages and priorities front and centre.
- **Developing engagement:** The Council could make more use of surveys and polls.
- **Use of video:** Currently there is little video content except for meetings of the Council. This means that the Council is missing out on a range of opportunities to engage even more effectively.
- **Review and rationalisation of social media:** The Council through its core brand and its sub-brands maintains a considerable 'reach'. Some social media is underutilised (X (Twitter) and Christmas in Crediton) and some is used but has a relatively low number of followers (Youth Service). The Council might want to consider if such an arrangement constitutes the best use of resources.

## Newsletter

The Council has a newsletter called the 'Update'. From the contents of the Council's website, it appears to be produced infrequently. In the current year it has been done on a quarterly basis in January, March, and July.

It was reported that the newsletter does have some physical distribution. The newsletter goes up on the Council's website in PDF format. There is a plain text format in the form of a PDF. Old editions of the newsletter are placed on the website in PDF format or as a PNG image file.

The newsletter is designed and produced in-house. The Council's logo and name is prominent on the first page. There is a good mix of photos and text. The articles are easy to read and in plain English. There is a good mix of news and upcoming events.

## What could be improved

- **Messaging:** There is some development of messaging. For instance, good news and Council activity is reported on. However, opportunities to engage and to develop key messages, such as the difference between the Council and other authorities is missed.
- **'Calls to action'** could be developed more. For instance, instead of having half a side of A4 with contact details people could be encouraged to visit the Council's website to find out more. In the most recent edition there are no polls, surveys, or comment boxes.
- **Distribution of the physical newsletter.** The physical newsletter could be distributed across a wider area of the town. This could help the Council engage more widely with every audience. News about upcoming events and important issues could help to raise attendance, participation, and awareness.
- **Email newsletters (e-Newsletter):** The Council could in time consider the creation of a new email newsletter.
- **Town Guide:** The Council could develop a town guide. Many areas that have tourism as a focus will have such a guide. Such an approach could allow for a review and rebranding of the Redvers Rambles. It could also be an opportunity to strengthen existing relationships with external groups and to create new ones.



## Elected members communications

The pre-workshop survey appears to have had limited engagement from councillors. One councillor was present during the workshop. However, there is acceptance that councillors play an important role in the external communications of the Council.

There is a general enthusiasm from Members to engage with communications. A clear desire to connect with the community and develop a genuine conversation. The role of the Mayor in being the 'front face' of the Council and having an important civic role was identified.

This Strategy is focused primarily on external communications. However, concerns were raised that external communications are not as effective as they could be because of issues with internal communications.

### What could be improved

- **Hard to reach groups:** Councillors could play an important role in reaching 'hard to reach groups' and communities.
- **Communications training:** Members could benefit from regular training in how to build two-way conversations with the community and effective communications.
- **Raising the profile of the Council:** Increased interaction with local groups and organisations will help to raise the profile of the Council.
- **Partnership working:** An increase in interaction will also lead to involvement with projects and partnership working. This will allow the Council to demonstrate value to the community and create strong links with the groups it works with. One easy thing to do would be to create a list of stakeholders that need to be engaged with.
- **Internal communications:** A more consistent and strategic approach should be developed in relation to internal communications. The goal would be to ensure that all staff understand key messages and issues.

## Press release and articles

The Council makes some use of press releases. Unfortunately, it does not appear that press releases and articles are put on the website. It should consider making more of the opportunities that press releases and articles give. They allow the Council to reach out to new and hard to reach audiences. It will also help it to develop relationships with the local and regional media.

### What could be improved

- **Reuse press releases and articles:** An advantage of writing press releases is that the information can be reused for posts on the website, social media posts and newsletter content. The same is also true in reverse. For example, the Council could look to quickly turn newsletter articles into press releases for instance.
- **Develop a plan:** The Council should consider the development of an informal plan for the creation of press releases. This would be a particularly useful step in relation to events and making major announcements. The plan should be informal and adaptable, but still provide a framework to work towards.

# Public facing communications by officers

The enthusiasm of public facing officers to engage with the community was mentioned. However, little thought seems to have been given to the key role officers (or those contracted or supported by the Council) play in external communications.

Whilst it was recognised that officers did engage with the public, no steps have been taken to provide messages or communications training.

An issue with internal communications was identified during the workshop. There is no single person who has responsibility for communications on a day-to-day basis. There is also no long-term and strategic approach to either internal or external communications.

In addition to the issue identified above there seems to be limited understanding from Members of the finite human resources available in terms of staffing. Limited time and the need for additional resources was mentioned several times in both the survey and the workshop.

## What could be improved

- **Training:** As part of the induction programme public facing members of staff should be provided with basic messages and training in how to communicate the Council's objectives. For officers involved with communications there might also be a requirement for crisis communications training.
- **Internal communications:** A more consistent and strategic approach should be developed in relation to internal communications. The goal would be to ensure that all staff understand key messages and issues.

# Section 3: Strategy

## Key messages and tone of voice

The key messages are in bold. They are the information the Council should be attempting to get across in its external communications.

The messages which are not in bold build on the key messages. They could be used in specific communications and contexts.

### **Crediton Town Council...**

#### **Serves the community of Crediton**

- Community is at the heart of everything we do
- Your Town Council manages or provides the following important services: (((INSERT)))
- We are currently working on the following projects for our community: (((INSERT)))

#### **Provides value for money**

- We provide grant funding community groups in our area. Last year the Town Council's funding supported: (((INSERT)))
- Have your say about our priorities. Take part in the participatory budget.
- In the past five years we have achieved the following:

#### **Listens to what you have to say**

- As an open and transparent Council, we want to hear what you have to say.
- Take part in one of our regular surveys.

### **Tone of Voice**

The Council's external 'tone of voice' will as a default be:

- Engaging
- Proactive
- Relevant
- Celebrating success and achievement
- Informal but not inappropriate

# Audiences

Below is a list of audiences. These are the groups of people that the Council either communicates with or wishes to. This represents a starting position that will need to be refined.

- Residents
- Visitors
- Those working in the area
- Businesses
- Higher tier authorities
- MP / PCC / regional and national government
- Press and media
- Emergency Services
- Other parish and town councils
- Third Sector - Charity/Voluntary groups
- Community Organisations
- Service Users
- Staff and contractors
- Councillors

Audiences requiring specific focus were identified during the workshop as:

- Commuters and professionals

## Audience: Commuters and professionals

### Communications Objectives

- Proactively listen to and seek views from different parts of the community, as well as from individuals and groups that may not regularly interact with the Council.
- Build a sustainable way of communicating with an audience that is often 'time poor' and can feel disengaged.
- Ensure that the whole community has a voice and can fully engage with the Council. In other words, make communication with the Council as 'frictionless' as possible.

### Key messages

In addition to the Key Messages this audience should receive the following specific message:

- Specific messages demonstrating how the precept has been used in support of their community. For instance:
- The Council supported (((INSERT))) events
- The Council maintains (((INSERT))) services

- Have your say about our priorities. Take part in the participatory budget or one of our regular surveys.

## **Communications channels to promote the key messages**

- Ensure that newsletters and leaflets have a feedback mechanism, such as a QR code, that leads to a quick and simple form
- In areas where there are lots of people from this audience, humanise the council by providing literature with 'real people's' faces on them
- Increase the use of video on social media and the website and ensure that closed captions are provided
- Consider the possibility of using social media such as LinkedIn in the future
- Provide access to quick feedback forms, surveys and polls on existing social media
- Develop and use an email newsletter system
- Community and shop noticeboards
- Newsletter (physical and an email Newsletter) - with a small section focusing specifically on the area
- Councillors acting as community representatives - specific surveys or street surgeries
- Use the key themes, such as climate change and sustainability, to engage
- Consider how people from the area can feel part of the decision making. This could include the live streaming of meetings, allowing people to have their say remotely or specifically surveying the area when decisions are being considered that only impact it.

## **Communications Objectives**

In this section we have tried to link communication objectives to the Council's core strategic aims. The current Strategic Plan period will come to an end in 2025. This section will therefore be somewhat timebound. However, it could provide a useful starting point when the Strategic Plan is next reviewed.

To avoid repetition the bullet points under each area have not been included in this section. They can be found at section 1 'Background' of this Strategic.

# **1. Managing development**

## **Communications objectives**

- Highlight success and work towards achieving sustainable development
- Signpost residents to sources of advice and support when undertaking renovations
- Represent the community's views on issues to principal tier authorities and developers.
- Engage with higher tier authorities to try to ensure that sustainability is considered at all stages in the planning process
- Undertake regular reviews of documents, content, surveys, etc

- Gather information that demonstrates that projects and funding are having a positive material impact
- Work with partners to promote activities that improve the connectedness of Crediton
- Develop responsive mechanisms to measure the communities' assets, needs, opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. Such information should be gathered and regularly reviewed
- Make clear the role the Town Council plays in supporting sustainable development and growth
- Further develop and sustain partnership working arrangements to drive sustainable economic and employment growth
- Highlight any work undertaken to protect green space and to promote biodiversity
- Develop communications channels with audiences and parts of the community engaged in the protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- Promote specific aspects of the Council's services and events that support the natural environment and biodiversity
- Raise awareness about the Neighbourhood Plan

## Key audiences

There are three key audiences:

- **Developers and planners.** The objective with this audience should be to engage and develop sustainable and appropriate planning for the town. Presumably the Neighbourhood Plan will play a key role in this area.
- **Residents and service users.** A specific objective should be to demonstrate the positive role the Town Council is playing in improving sustainability and the environment. Signposting and support for residents wanting to improve sustainability will also be key.
- **Local groups and organisations.** Local groups promoting sustainability, bio-diversity and tackling the climate crisis should be engaged with. The goal would be to allow for effective signposting to those who need it, to gather support for sustainable growth and the promotion of the work being undertaken by the Council.

## Key communications channels to promote the communication objectives

All communication channels available to the Council will play a key role. However, for this objective councillors and senior officers engaging with planners and developers is likely to be key in achieving the Council's objectives.

## 2. Providing Services

### Communications objectives

- Engage with higher tier authorities to encourage devolution of assets and services to the Town Council;
- Capture sufficient data to be able to develop insights and to demonstrate sustainability and value for money

- Highlight the work undertaken by the Council to promote accessibility
- Regularly report back to residents on progress made on sustainability projects
- Demonstrate value for money regularly but particularly during the budget setting process
- Develop communications that support an asset based approach with the objective of supporting community initiatives
- Proactively listen to and seek views from all parts of the community, as well as from individuals and groups that may not regularly interact with the council
- Specifically reach out to under-represented audiences and those that have lower engagement with the Council

### **Key audiences**

Residents and service users are the key audience for this objective. It will be important to build and develop sustainable mechanisms to collect views, feedback, and user experience. Businesses and visitors to the town will also form an important audience.

### **Key communications channels to promote the communication objectives**

Many communication channels will play a role in relation to this objective. The following are likely to be the most important:

- Noticeboards
- Community noticeboards
- The Council's website
- Social media
- Newsletter and e-newsletters
- Press release and articles
- Public facing communications by officers
- Service user communications

## **3. Building Relationships**

### **Communications objectives**

- Identify priorities to meet the needs of our community, both as an individual service provider and a partner, and ensure that these take account of national and regional priorities
- Work closely with other councils and organisations associated with the area
- Develop partnership working arrangements where possible
- Ensure that we reach as wide an audience as possible through partnership work
- Consistently deliver on shared priorities and objectives
- Amplify shared campaigns, particularly those relating to the Council's strategic objectives and key areas of focus
- Work with others to promote awareness of the visitor and tourism offer for the area

- Work with partners to make public spaces more accessible
- Develop mechanisms to promote collaboration and the sharing of information between partner organisations
- Celebrate and highlight success all year round
- Further develop and sustain partnership working arrangements to drive economic and employment growth
- Involve stakeholders with user-satisfaction surveys and other customer feedback
- Work with partners to get them to more effectively signpost to the Council

### **Key audiences**

There are a wide range of groups that make up the audience for this communication objective. The following is not an exhaustive list:

- Businesses
- Other councils and authorities
- MP / PCC / regional and national government
- Third Sector - Charity/Voluntary groups
- Community Organisations

### **Key communications channels to promote the communication objectives**

This objective will require the use of a wide range of communications. It is arguably the most complicated area because it will require a sustainable mix of the following:

- Information and promotion – social media, the website, newsletters, articles, and noticeboards
- Engagement – Mix of face-to-face communications and direct written communications (digital and physical)
- Feedback and comment – Ensuring there are mechanisms to collect views such as email, surveys (digital and physical) and online polls

## **4. Promoting Crediton**

### **Communications objectives**

- Clearly communicate to residents, businesses, organisations, service users, partners and stakeholders the Council's priorities and work it undertakes across all council communications
- Build a narrative of what the council does do and what it does not do, furthering the council's culture of transparency, accessibility, and accountability
- Use council communications to consistently promote the Council's brand and achievements
- Develop a clear brand for the Town Council that is distinct from other councils and that reflects our aspirations for Crediton



- Use council communications to consistently reach out to all areas of the community and build a strong sense of identity for the town
- Undertake regular reviews of documents, content, surveys, etc. The objective is to ensure that they are clear, accessible and in plain English
- Ensure that all sections of the community can access and take part in surveys and consultations
- Work with partners to promote activities that improve outcomes and highlight any successes
- Clearly advertise the opportunities that the community has to make its voice heard or to have a say in decision making
- Develop ways of co-producing communications materials with key audiences
- Proactively listen to and seek views from all parts of the community, as well as from individuals and groups that may not regularly interact with the council
- Specifically reach out to under-represented audiences and those that have lower engagement with the Council
- Work with others to promote awareness of the visitor and tourism offer for the area
- Work with partners to get them to more effectively signpost to the Council

### **Key audiences**

This objective will in effect call for communication with the entire community as well as visitors. Promotion will also require engagement with partners outside of the town.

### **Key communications channels to promote the communication objectives**

The objective will require the use of every form of communication. Digital communication, particularly social media, in relation to tourism is likely to be key to achieving the objectives of the Council.

## **5. Strengthening our community**

### **Communications objectives**

- Identify priorities to meet the needs of our community, both as an individual service provider and a partner, and ensure that these take account of national and regional priorities
- Develop partnership working arrangements where possible
- Ensure that we reach as wide an audience as possible through partnership work
- Consistently deliver on shared priorities and objectives
- Amplify shared campaigns, particularly those relating to the Council's strategic objectives and key areas of focus
- Develop mechanisms to promote collaboration and the sharing of information between partner organisations
- Celebrate and highlight success all year round

- Further develop and sustain partnership working arrangements to drive economic and employment growth
- Involve stakeholders with user-satisfaction surveys and other customer feedback
- Make clear the role the Town Council plays in supporting sustainable development and growth
- Highlight any work undertaken to protect green space and to promote biodiversity
- Demonstrate and celebrate the success of the youth work service
- Promote the success the Council has had in achieving accredited awards

### **Key audiences**

An objective that will call for engagement across a wide range of groups. There will clearly be a particular focus on community groups and organisations, stakeholders, young people, and the parents of young people.

The key communications channels to promote the communication objectives will be similar to those set out for core objective 3 'Building Relationships'.

# Section 4: Recommendations

## Our recommendations

This section contains recommendations for the Council to consider. The recommendations are based on our research and the information gathered.

The Council must consider carefully what recommendations it will implement and over what timeframe. The budget and human resources requirements should also be considered.

It is unlikely that the Council will be able to implement all the recommendations in one go. It will most likely take several years.

If the Strategy is endorsed by the Council, we will work with officers to create a Communications Plan, running between late 2023 and Spring 2025. The plan will set out a timeline for communications activities and SMART targets.

We will support the council to implement the Communications Plan through our Council Hive (Premium) service.

Appendix A sets out a Proposed Work Plan. This has been provided to give a broad indication of the timeframe and to make it easier to visualise the recommendations.

## Review of human and financial resources

Consideration should be given in the first instance as to how the recommendations and suggestions will be implemented. Most importantly, consideration should be given as to who will undertake the work.

We also recommend that the Council review its communications budget lines. Currently communication budget lines are split over several cost centres. Having dedicated communication budget lines would help to plan and resource appropriate community engagement. It would also assist in making the Council more proactive.

The Council should also consider giving oversight of communications to a single Committee of the Council. Currently it is not clear which specific Committee is responsible.

Specifically in relation to human resources we have listed four broad approaches below. All have obvious pros and cons attached to them. It's worth noting that they are not mutually exclusive, and a 'mixed approach' could be taken. The broad options are:

1. **Do nothing or very little:** This would see the status quo continue largely unaffected by this Strategy and the issues raised. While this might seem like an attractive approach the long-term benefits will be minimal. This is because of the time and resources which are put into maintaining an ad hoc and responsive approach.

2. **Minimal change to the current arrangements:** This arrangement would see some change, but the current arrangements would be broadly stuck to. The goal with this approach would be to make small changes to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
3. **Contract out communications:** Many organisations and councils enter arrangements for others to manage communications for them. The Council could look to have another organisation manage some or all its communications.
4. **Create a new post:** Create a new staff role with strategic oversight and management of communications.

It is unlikely that with the current human resources at its disposal the Council will achieve its objectives. This is not a criticism of the Clerk or the team. They have achieved a lot despite the pandemic and high workload.

Option 1 could be pursued, but it would most likely mean the Council continuing to adopt a responsive approach to communications.

In relation to option 2 there was a degree of 'scepticism' during the workshop about 'finding' additional time and human resources. It feels from the evidence that a point has been reached where more human resources and time is required.

Our recommendation would therefore be for the Council to undertake what it can as per option 2, but to consider options 3 and 4. We feel that those options are the most likely to support the Council in achieving its objectives.

The fourth approach which would lead to the creation of a 'Communications Officer' or a similarly titled role. There are clearly many issues to consider, such as budgets, job descriptions, etc. However, were the Council minded to pursue option 4 we suggest that the focus of the role should be:

- Strategic oversight of external communications across the council;
- Lead on the overall delivery of the implementation of this communications strategy;
- Develop and implement a resource-appropriate council-wide communications plan, with key deliverables and timescales, across each service area and channel;
- Create and develop high-quality content;
- Monitor and report on KPIs;
- Assist in the development of an internal communications plan;
- Use a range of tools and techniques to proactively communicate and engage with different audiences using identified key messages, and;
- Regularly liaises with staff from each service area, to understand the issues, their needs, and requirements, as well as messaging issues.

## Undertake a branding exercise

The Council could consider undertaking a branding exercise. This could be done externally by a graphics designer, branding consultant or communications expert.

Regardless of whether the Council undertakes a branding exercise it should employ a consistent approach to its brand. The need for a stronger and clearer Council identity was mentioned in both the survey and during the workshop.

There is a particular issue with the high number of sub-brands that the Council has. The creation of a 'brand family' could be a sensible way forward.

The goal of the exercise would be to establish a clear identity and to create a style guide. This would create a more consistent and clearer brand for the Council. It could also assist in:

- The development of identity for the Council;
- Making clear the services managed by the Council;
- Making the distinction between the Council and other authorities clearer;
- Helping to develop a more engaging tone and approach to communications, and;
- Greater consistency of language, messaging, and imagery.

## Key performance indicators (KPIs)

The Council should regularly review important KPIs. This would allow the Council to monitor the reach and effectiveness of its communications. KPI tracking should be undertaken monthly. It could be reviewed once a quarter either informally or formally through a committee.

### Examples of digital (online) KPIs:

- Digital surveys
- Feedback and responses received
- Participation rate
- Analysis of surveys - tracked year on year
- Website page views and behaviours
- Length of visit on each website page
- Which pages are accessed by users and user journey
- Social media 'Insights' data: including post views and engagement data, as well as more basic metrics such as page/account followers
- For example, key Facebook KPIs should include:
  - Page summary statistics
  - Reach and engagement levels for posts over time
  - No. minutes of video viewed for specific video content
  - Demographic breakdown (gender, age) for video content

- Number of messages received through digital channels, including email and via social media
- Signposted clicks to other websites
- Email newsletter click through rate

### **Examples of physical (print and in-person) KPIs:**

- Feedback and responses received to print-based surveys
- Analysis of surveys - tracked year on year
- Event based surveys - enquiring how people found about the event
- Press release coverage
- Articles in other organisations newsletters coverage
- Newsletter interaction - based on 'Call to Action' take up

## **Carry out annual surveys**

A key objective should be to understand how residents view the council and to what extent residents understand the work the Council does. Effectively, taking the pulse of the community.

To properly understand these issues, we recommend the Council should aim to carry out an annual survey.

This would ideally be done in both print and digital formats. The survey would ask a range of open and closed questions about residents' priorities. It would also seek to track public opinion on Council messages, projects, and initiatives.

The findings of the survey could be included in the Council's annual report. They could also inform the Council's priorities and plans, as well as the development of services.

This annual cycle of survey and report will build up a picture of the shifting priorities of residents. It should also provide key measurables to allow the Council to assess effectiveness of its communications.

### **Key points to consider when conducting a survey:**

- Ideally carry out a survey in both print and digital formats, to ensure maximum return
- Printed version of the survey: either delivered to every house through a reliable delivery service or through Royal Mail's Door To Door service (which delivers based on Post Code sectors). Alternatively deliver to local venues, such as cafes, leisure centres, libraries, etc and signpost people to collect from there, as well as having some centrally available at the council
- Digital version of the survey: promoted through the council's website, email newsletter and across all social media channels. Make use of paid-for social media advertising (especially on Facebook), which allows you to effectively target anyone living within Post Code sectors within the Council's boundaries, even if they don't currently engage/follow/like the council on social media

- Promote using local media - press releases to local newspapers, publications, radio etc all work well if the survey has the right media angle
- Consider what you're trying to achieve, and what you want to know. Ideally have a balance of open and closed questions, with the closed questions being binary choices, scales, or multiple-choice options
- Consider the effective use of digital surveys: Tools such as TypeForm or Survey Monkey are both powerful, inexpensive and provide reasonable built-in reports for closed questions
- Consider whether to outsource the entire process to a third-party company to manage the survey process end-to-end

## Carry out regular surveys

Assuming there is sufficient capacity the Council should consider establishing a more regular cycle of surveys. This would complement the insights gained from the Annual Survey as well as providing more up to date feedback from the community.

The 'regular surveys' could also be targeted to specific audiences through specific communication channels. For instance, there could be a quick digital survey on social media focusing on youth issues. Alternatively, it could be a physical survey for service users that goes out with the newsletters.

The Council could have a formal plan or could take a more informal approach. There are pros and cons to both. However, having a plan in the short term might be preferable as it would provide a framework to work in.

**Many of the key points raised in relation to the Annual Survey are also applicable to the more regular surveys. Other points to consider:**

- Given the increased frequency, who will 'own' regular surveys and plan the work?
- How often will the regular surveys happen?
- How will the more regular feedback and information gathered in the surveys be integrated into the decision-making structures of the Council?
- How could regular surveys be used to encourage residents to engage with other communications channels, for instance, social media, the website, etc?

## Create an email newsletter

We would recommend that the Council set up an email newsletter through a dedicated email service such as MailChimp. Email newsletters are a cost effective way to reach local residents. Given the limited human resources available to the Council the creation of an email newsletter should be seen as a long-term project.

Email is increasingly seen as an 'official' form of communication and building a mailing list of residents is a particularly effective way to both communicate the council's messages and signpost to social media and the Council's website.

## **We would advise:**

- The Council to review any existing email lists it holds and carries out a re-consenting programme in line with data compliance regulations to opt them into a new e-newsletter
- Using MailChimp to start a monthly e-newsletter to residents
- The Council should use its social media and website to encourage residents to sign up for the newsletter service
- Over time consider setting up separate eNewsletters for specific audiences - Climate emergency, specific groups of residents, businesses, etc
- Consider content that is beyond regular 'newsletter' style content, such as videos, seasonal messages, key service updates and announcements, etc
- Using the email newsletter to promote strategic conversations, for instance, encouraging participation in Annual Survey, the Council's programme of events, etc

## **Develop a social media strategy**

We would recommend that the Council develop an annual social media strategy. Consideration should be given to having specific plans throughout the year for high profile events or activities.

On a basic level it would summarise what the Council plans to do and what it hopes to achieve. It should have enough detail to guide actions but remain flexible enough to respond to events. It should also set out briefly how external negative comments and activity will be handled.

The use of different social media communication channels should also be considered. We recommend that the Council should get Facebook 'right' first before it moves onto others. After Facebook is 'right' we advise the Council to try Instagram. This is because it can be managed through Meta Business Suite.

One specific aim of the strategy should be to rationalise where possible the Councils different social media identities.

## **We recommend that the social media strategy set out:**

- How the Council will integrate social media with other communications channels;
- KPIs to allow the Council to understand what is working and what needs improvement;
- The staffing resources and technical capabilities required;
- Budgetary requirements (ads, paid for surveys, external professional fees, etc);
- Audiences focus;
- What social media channels will be used and how they will be used to communicate with different audiences;
- Broadly set out how stories will be developed, and content shared, and;
- Consider how success and positive developments will be highlighted effectively.



## **‘Meet the Council’**

We recommend that the Council hold a series of ‘Meet the Council’ events.

### **Physical**

We recommend that the Council hold in person events in each community. These could be ‘street surgeries’, an informal meeting in a community venue or a simple door knocking exercise.

The objective is to both ‘humanise’ the Council, make clear that the Council wants to engage and to start having a conversation. It is advisable to have an easy and clear feedback mechanism for people to use. This could be a simple survey.

### **Online events**

Ideally, they would be a small group of councillors attending each one on a rota basis, with an officer in support. They could be held in different locations across the Council’s area. Some could be done via Zoom/Teams and then live streamed to social media. They should be short, no longer than one hour and semi-structured (yet informal).

The Council should consider starting off with councillors and officers introducing themselves. Then a nominated councillor outlines a summary of the work of the council, its current priorities, and areas of focus. Hopefully this would then lead to a semi-structured conversation and questions from members of the public.

We would recommend piloting one event initially. Consider attendance and reaction both during the meeting and afterwards. Consider whether to hold further events and how often.

## **Increase the use of video across communication channels**

Video is one of the most powerful tools available to the Council to build positive engagement.

Good video does not necessarily have to be high-end and professionally edited, nor does it need to involve huge amounts of time or resources. Most videos can simply be taken on a mobile phone, with little editing required, if any.

It is important that captions are added wherever possible, either automatically (e.g., if being placed on YouTube, Facebook, etc) or manually using a caption-generating service.

Below we have created a table with ideas for video content that the Council could create.

Area of service / channel	Time/Effort involved	Details
Council website home page	Quick win	Create a short (1-2 mins) 'welcome' video from the Mayor, welcoming users to the site and summarising what users can access, and signposting appropriately
Social media (including YouTube)	Quick win	As recommended above. Hold a virtual meeting on key topics (or even just a 'meet the council'-style meeting) and stream to social media, to encourage and drive positive engagement with the council
Social media (including YouTube)	Quick win	Either pre-record or ideally go 'live' with short, seasonal, or topical messages from officers/key members on social media
Social media (including YouTube)	Some time and effort required - including editing	A series of videos explaining in simple terms a complex issue such as the role the Council plays in the planning process
Social media (including YouTube)	Some time and effort required - including editing	A series of videos highlighting projects and initiatives relating to key overarching objectives of the Council

## Develop a plan to reach specific audiences more effectively

During the workshops it was mentioned that the Council has difficulty in effectively engaging with commuters and professionals. No local council can communicate with all audiences all the time. However, where a longstanding issue is identified consideration should be given to the practical steps that can be taken to reach a particular audience.

We therefore recommend that the Council develop a plan as to how it will communicate with 'hard to reach' audiences. The plan would include specific KPIs and a specific plan of action.

The goal would be to ensure that the Council considers all the actions it could take to reach such audiences. It would also seek to provide specific metrics by which the Council could measure its successes and identify areas for improvement. As a starting point the Council could consider the ideas set out for specific audiences in the 'Audience' section of the Strategy.

## Review of the Council's website

At section two we set out some ways in which we felt that the Council's website could be improved. Our key recommendation would be that the Council consider ways that it clearly sets out a clear identity separate to other councils. We recommend that the following be considered:

- Have a page in plain English that clearly state the differences between different councils
- Consider creating a separate A-Z services guide and an FAQ section

- Make use of an introductory video on the home page
- Clearly highlight positive achievements of the Town Council
- Where appropriate reduce the use of PDFs and increase information in HTML format
- Make greater use of analytics to understand how people use the website
- Consider the issue of sub-brands, particularly how the website could link to their social media presence

## Review of signage

We recommend that the Council undertake a review of the signage. This should cover the land it manages, services it runs and projects it is involved in. The goal is to ensure that the signage is prominent so that the community is aware of the Council's services and functions.

The review of signage could take place in advance of any branding exercise. This will ensure that it is ready to create new signage straight after the branding exercise is complete.

The idea proposed of a noticeboard in the Market Place should be considered. Those receiving grant funding should be required to publicly acknowledge the Council's contribution.

## Training and internal communications

We recommend that members and officers could benefit from regular training in how to build two-way conversations with the community and effective communications. This should form part of an induction programme for both. They should also be provided with basic messages and training in how to communicate the Council's objectives.

Specifically in relation to internal communications we recommend that the Council undertake an audit of skills. A regular internal survey could be conducted to establish what people's availability is to support external communications. The Council could also develop a regular email (once a month) for all councillors letting them know what has happened and what is coming up.

## Press release and articles

We recommend that the Council pursue some quick wins. For instance, making announcements about upcoming events. Another simple thing to do would be to develop a 'contact sheet' for the local and regional media. The Council should actively be trying to get articles and content in local organisations communications. For example, if a local school has a newsletter the Council should see if they will put in some information about an upcoming Council event.

Consider developing a plan for the creation of press releases and articles. This would be a particularly useful step in relation to events and major announcements. The plan should be informal and adaptable, but still provide a framework to work within.

# Appendix A: Proposed work plan

The table below provides a reference number and brief description of the recommendation. A suggested timeline and priority rating is given. An estimate of the time that will be required for each task. Please note that this is just an estimate, and many factors could alter the amount of time required to complete the work. For ease of reference a column has been provided setting out if a task would best be done 'in-house' (that is by the Council) or 'contracted' (could be done by an external company).

No.	Priority	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Est. time to complete	In-house or contracted
1	High	<b>Review of human and financial resources.</b> Consider the human resource requirements in relation to the core objectives of the Council and this report. Create a budget based on appendix A. In this instance a long timeframe has been suggested because it might take more than one budget round to get things 'right'.	3-12 months	5-15 working days (includes meeting/research)	In-house
2	High	<b>Messaging.</b> Agree messages for each of the distinct audiences identified, to ensure the council is clear what message it is trying to communicate to which audience and when it needs to do this.	ASAP	3 - 10 hours	In-house
3	High	<b>SMART objectives.</b> Consider how the specific communication objectives included in the report could be 'converted' to SMART objectives.	ASAP	Maximum of 5 hours	In-house
4	High	<b>Key performance indicators (KPIs).</b> Establish KPIs and start to record data. This should be set out in an easy to review format. Officers could review the information quarterly and bring to a meeting of the Council or a Committee on an annual basis.	ASAP	2-3 hours initially. 1 hour every month thereafter	In-house

No.	Priority	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Est. time to complete	In-house or contracted
5	Medium	<b>Policy review.</b> Update and refresh existing communications and social media policy documents. The suggested timeline has been given so that policies are ready for review by the Annual Meeting of the Town Council. The review could include consideration about which specific committee has oversight of communications.	Within 8 months	15-20 hours	In-house
6	Medium	<b>Branding review.</b> Refresh and enhance the council's branding by updating the council's logo, identifying, and creating a style-guide that includes a branded colour scheme and font suite, for use throughout the council's communications. Consider specially how the Council's relationship with the sub-brands could be made clearer. External signage could be considered as well.	3-6 months	10 -15 hours if contracted out	Contracted
7	Medium	<b>Newsletter distribution.</b> Consider how a physical version of the newsletter could be distributed more widely. This could include paid for distribution, delivery by volunteers, dropping it off in prominent locations or a combination of methods.	12-18 months	Consideration 4-8 hours. Distribution is unknown	In-house. Distribution could be contracted
8	Medium	<b>Creation of a noticeboard list.</b> Develop a list of community noticeboards that the Council could use to reach a wider audience. Once compiled posters should be sent out or put up in those locations. The list should be reviewed from time to time.	ASAP	Maximum of 5 hours	In-house
9	Medium	<b>Development of an email newsletter.</b> Create a free email newsletter, enabling residents to sign up to hear from the council and to enable officers to communicate information in a timely manner and when appropriate to do so. Ensure the system is GDPR compliant.	2-3 years	Assuming no set up time 10-15 hours a month	Set up contract out and in-house thereafter

No.	Priority	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Est. time to complete	In-house or contracted
10	Medium	<b>Carry out annual surveys.</b> Consider establishing an annual survey of the community. Consider the specific questions. Consider using the participatory budget as a starting point. Report back at the following Annual Parishioners meeting and draw up plans for the next one.	3-6 months	10-20 hours	In-house  Set up could be contracted
11	Medium	<b>Carry out regular surveys.</b> Please see the relevant section in the Strategy. The Council should consider the requirements and create a plan for how regular surveys will be conducted.	3-6 months	5-10 hours	In-house
12	Medium	<b>Develop a social media plan.</b> Set out a more strategic and managed approach to social media. It should give consideration as to how the Council's social media could grow, be rationalised, and made effective. Use of video should be increased where possible.	3-6 months	10-15 hours	In-house
13	Medium	<b>Increase the use of video</b> across communication channels. Consider the ideas set out in the Strategy and introduce them as soon as is possible.	ASAP	1-2 hours a week on an ongoing basis	In-house
14	Medium	<b>Review of the Council's website.</b> Please see the relevant section in the Strategy for suggestions. There are three elements to this recommendation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quick wins.</b> These could be done relatively quickly and in-house. For instance, converting text to plain English and creating a F&amp;Q section.</li> <li><b>Long-term issues.</b> Some suggestions will take some time to do. For instance, conversion of PDFs to HTML and a review of the sub-brand pages.</li> <li><b>Accessibility.</b> The website should be reviewed, amendments made where possible and the Statement updated. This will almost certainly need to be contracted out to a specialist.</li> </ol>	6-18 months	Quick wins: max 1 working day  Long-term issues: 15-37 hours  Accessibility should be contracted and therefore N/A	In-house  Accessibility work will need to be contracted

No.	Priority	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Est. time to complete	In-house or contracted
15	Medium	<b>Review of signage.</b> Undertake a review of the signage used for Council property and services. The goal is to establish if property is clearly branded and where it is to consider possible solutions. Could most usefully be done alongside the review of branding. The review could include an investigation into the possibility of having a noticeboard in the Market Place installed.	3-6 months	The review 5-7 hours  Investigation into the Market Place sign unknown	In-house
16	Medium	<b>Training and internal communications.</b> The Council should review its internal communications processes to ensure that they are efficient and effective. The outcome of the review should be a simple plan that could be implemented and reviewed by a specific committee. The review could be contracted out or done in-house. The advantage of having an 'outside person' do it is that they can spot things those on the 'inside' can't see.	6-18 months	If done in-house 10-30 hours	Could be either in-house or contracted out
17	Low	<b>Develop a plan to reach specific audiences more effectively.</b> It was mentioned that young professionals, particularly those who commute, are 'hard to reach' for the Council. It could develop a specific plan as to how it could reach those people to ensure that it is engaging with all sections of the community effectively.	18 months - 3 years	15-30 hours	In-house
18	Low	<b>Press release and articles plan.</b> A simple plan to allow for the creation of press releases and articles for the website. This does not need to be formal and would act more as a loose framework for staff to follow and plan against.	18 months - 3 years	2-5 hours every month	In-house