

Community Services Committee

Report Title:	Communications and Community Engagement
Meeting Date:	11 November 2025
Contact Officer:	Lizzie Fuller, Communications Manager Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager Susan Metcalfe, Customer Services Officer Immy Hawkins, Communications Apprentice

Purpose of the Report

1. To receive a report on Town Council communications and community engagement since the last report (July 2025).

Compliments & Complaints

From August 2025 – October 2025

Thame Town Council

Verbal Compliments	No.	Verbal Complaints	No.
Mayor	1	Pond	1
Fair	2	Toilets	1
Caretaker	1	Fair	4
		Bushes	1
Total	4		7

South Oxfordshire District Council

Verbal Compliments	No.	Verbal Complaints	No.
Total	0		0

Oxfordshire County Council

Verbal Compliments	No.	Verbal Complaints	No.
Disabled Parking	2	Disabled Parking	1
Total	2		2

Social Media

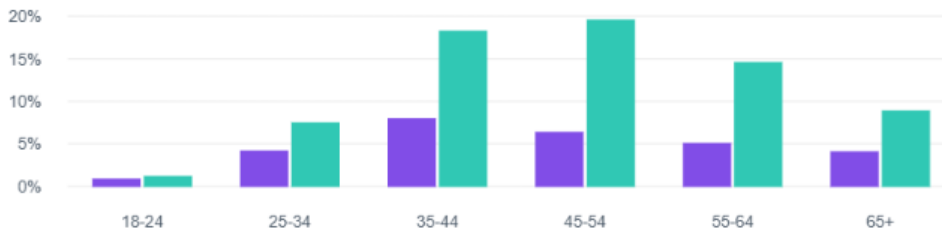
2. Current figures¹ show Thame Town Council has:

- Facebook followers – 2,775, up from 2,669 in July 2025 (4% increase)

¹ As at 21 October 2025

Age and gender

Men 29.30%
 Women 70.70%



Location

Towns/cities

Countries

Thame	1,253
Aylesbury	345
Chinnor	139
Oxford	59
Bicester	40

- Instagram followers – 698, up from 660 in July 2025 (5.7% increase). It should be noted that the Town Council temporarily lost access to the Instagram account from mid-May to mid-September (due to staff changes) and no content was posted during this time. It is hoped to better utilise Instagram’s functionality, such as reels, stories and highlights to boost content engagement.

3. Since the last report (February 2025 – July 2025), individual event page follower numbers are as follows:

- Thame Town Awards – 485 followers, up from 481 followers (Facebook)
- Taste of Thame
 - 972, down from 975 followers (Facebook)
 - 406 followers, up from 405 followers (Instagram)
- Thame Art Crawl
 - 762 followers, up from 737 followers (Facebook)
 - 1,094 followers, up from 1,043 followers (Instagram)
- Christmas in Thame — 1,975 followers, up from 1,900 followers (Facebook)
- Thame Local Produce Market
 - 935 followers, up from 928 followers (Facebook)
 - 1,075 followers, up from 1,059 followers (Instagram)

4. In the 90 days up to 7 July 2025, the top posts² on TTC’s Facebook page have been:

- Poppies around town – 179 interactions
- Temporary congestion charge in Oxford – 120 interactions
- VJ Day service at Memorial Gardens – 86 interactions
- Free Park & Ride in Oxford – 62 interactions

² In terms of interactions (likes, saves, comments, shares)

5. Thame September Fair live stream – 58 interactions
6. Lidl public consultation – 46 interactions

5. Between 7 July 2025 to 21 October 2025, some of TTC's most popular posts shared to Love Thame, a local Facebook group with over 19,900 members, have been:
 - Reports of / video claiming prison under Town Hall (85 reactions/32 comments)
 - VJ Day service at Memorial Gardens (53 reactions/1 comment)
 - Running track (23 reactions/4 comments)
 - Hosepipe ban (9 reactions/10 comments)
 - Van parked within Fair road closure (9 reactions/8 comments)
 - Lidl consultation event (7 reactions/16 comments)
 - September Fair / access (2 reactions/32 comments)
6. To manage the Town Council's growing communications, the Town Council has restarted using a content scheduler (SocialBee) so that posts can be published on a more regular basis. In developing the Communications Delivery Plan, the following categories are suggested (with frequency / end dates scheduled accordingly):
 - Community – Events / Activities that are either one-off or date-specific
 - Newsletter News – News articles from the newsletter each week
 - Timeless Posts – Generic promotion of services & projects
 - Opportunities – Sponsorship, volunteering, job vacancies, become a councillor, promotional opportunities
 - Did You Know? / ICYMI – Lesser known information that isn't date specific, or completed projects / ongoing services / newsletter news from 1month+ ago that people may have missed ('in case you missed it')
 - Positive news story – News stories that celebrate Thame's community spirit

Plus event feeds (e.g. Thame Art Crawl, Christmas) as required.

Newsletter

7. Current figures show Thame Town Council currently has 1,505 weekly newsletter subscribers up from 1,464 in July 2025. It is normal for the newsletter subscription numbers to fluctuate.
8. When taking account of the subscribers to the Business Newsletter (418), the Town Council has almost reached the maximum (2,000) subscribers for the free plan on MailChimp. Plans start from around £400/year depending on the number of subscribers. Alternative platforms are available and will be researched, e.g. Sender which is used to send the Environmental Newsletter. The newsletter is one of the main communication channels for the council, so consideration should be given to the reliability of the provider. A request has been made in the 2026/27 budget.
9. Since the start of 2025, we have been trialling a printed version of the weekly newsletter to help reach those who do not use social media. The printed version, available from the Information Centre continues to be well received. We continue to monitor how many are collected each week and comments from the public to decide whether it is something we should continue long-term.

April – July 2025: 148

August – October 2025: 157

Website

10. The Council's contract with the current website hosting & support provider has been extended to March 2026.
11. A request has been made in the 2026/27 budget for a new website as the current one is approaching 10 years old and is no longer compliant with accessibility legislation. It has a number of plugins, many of which are clunky or temperamental. The bespoke template means TTC has restricted editorial control on the layout, design, and functionality of the website. Retrofitting accessibility is often costly and less successful.
12. Options for a new site could include a) a similar bespoke website built on WordPress, b) build WordPress site in house (see Witney Town Council), or c) use a parish/town council specific template (e.g. Aubergine which is endorsed by SLCC, for examples see Aylesbury Town Council or Chinnor Parish Council).
13. Consideration of the website's layout / content / purpose should form part of the council's strategy / communications strategy.

14. LinkTree

- a. [Thame Buse Timetables LinkTree](#) – 6,580 views (since June 2024).
- b. [Thame Public Services LinkTree](#) – 3,260 views (since August 2024).
- c. [TTC Services LinkTree](#) – 851 views

15. **Analytics** – Data from Google Analytics for the 90 days to 22 October 2025 (see Appendix A) shows:
 - a. Total website views: 30,703
 - b. Most popular page: Festivals & Events (2,451 views)
 - c. The peak day for visitors was Friday 19 September – this is assumed to be connected to Thame Fair
 - d. Most of the peaks occur on Thursdays – this is assumed to be connected to newsletter publication day.

Roles

16. Following successful recruitment, the new Community Events Officer and Communications Apprentice (Level 3 Multi-Channel Marketer apprentice) commenced employment in August. Thanks to a handover from the outgoing Communications & Events Assistant, both are settling in well. As the Committee Services Officer role has now been backfilled (since 9 October), the Communications Manager is now able to fully focus on this new role.

Engagement

17. **Events** – Reports on the following events and their associated publicity are covered under separate agenda items: Thame Art Crawl, September & October Fairs
- a. **VJ Day** – A request for local information enabled the creation of a display in the Information Centre in the lead up to VJ Day showcasing local people’s stories and connections to this moment. A special e-newsletter was also produced. This received positive feedback both in person and on social media.
18. **Councillors at the Market** – The Mayor and Councillors have been regularly holding a stall at Thame Market on the third Tuesday of each month to meet the public and discuss Council-related issues. Engagement at the markets continues to be well received by the public. The log of issues raised can be viewed at Appendix B.
19. **Consultations** –
- a. **Part-Night Lighting in Oxfordshire:** A Facebook poll was held on Love Thame which generated 214 responses.
 - b. **2026-27 Budget:** The public were invited to make comment on the proposed budget via email between 4 September – 10 October. No responses were received.
20. **Feedback** – Over the summer the Town Council opened a painted 400m running track on Southern Road Recreation Ground. Feedback was sought via a survey which received 98 responses. 94% of respondents would support Thame having a permanent, all-weather running track. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, however some comments note the track is uneven in places with poor facilities (lighting, toilets).
21. **Community & Youth Centre** – TTC sought the views of LWS students during ACE week. Communication plans are being prepared for when the outcome of the public works loan is confirmed. On the basis it is successful, communications will focus on bringing the community up to speed on the project, fundraising and timelines. In addition to the general communications, the plan is to have a 4-page spread within the 2026 Town Guide, display banner at Southern Road Recreation Ground, and launch a fundraising campaign working with the Fundraiser.
22. **2026 Calendar** – After a successful publicity period, 105 entries were received, and the calendars are now on sale.
23. **2026 Town Guide** – Advertising spaces in the Town Guide are being promoted and just over 50% of sponsorship is secured (deadline mid-December). As always, the aim will be to cover the costs of printing and distribution around Thame, through advertising as per the 2025 edition. A suggested theme for the Town Guide is a focus on community support; the support available and how people can volunteer to help others.

24. **Red Kite Radio** – Changes in personnel at TTC and Red Kite Radio have meant TTC has not been on the radio for several months. Officers will seek to re-establish a regular slot with the radio station.

25. **Press Releases:**

- a. **Banking Hub** – press release to local and national media, and some MPs on 10 September 2025, as LINK confirmed Thame will not be getting a banking hub (further information under agenda item 14).
- b. **Vandalism** – statement issued in newsletter following graffiti/vandalism around Thame some of which used discriminatory language. Statement was well received by the public.
- c. **S106 funding for Community Youth Centre** – joint press release drafted with SODC – imminent publication.

26. **Monthly Information Centre Statistics:** The information centre is now reporting different type of queries that people ask either by person, telephone or via email. We have broken each query down into 18 categories: Advertising, Browsing/Visiting Thame, Bus/Train/Blue Badge, Directions/Telephone, Green Spaces, Highways, Hires, Lost and Found, Market, Meeting/Call Transfers, Play Areas, Purchase/Donations, Seasonal Events, SODC, TGNS, TTC Projects/Consultations, Tickets, Toilets.

Below shows the report for July, August and September 2025 months:

Month	Information Centre Visits	Phone Calls Taken	Emails Received	No. Working Days	Busiest Day	Most Popular Query	2nd Popular Query
July	586	156	59	23	Monday	Meeting/Call Transfers	Toilets
August	558	88	45	21	Tuesday	Browsing/Visiting Thame	Toilets
September	541	92	74	22	Monday	Seasonal Events	Meeting/Call Transfers

NB. September Stats missing one user due to laptop being wiped before getting data.

Upcoming Work

27. **Strategy & Delivery Plan** – The current plan is to present a Communications Strategy and Delivery Plan (following research and internal consultations, done in parallel with the main strategy work) for approval no later than the Community Services committee meeting on 17 March 2026. Officers are looking at running a survey to understand how residents do/don't receive council news and how we can communicate better and to a wider audience.

28. **Communications Focus up to March 2026:**

- a. Community Youth Centre – PWL outcome & fundraising
- b. Strategy engagement/workshops
- c. Events – Remembrance and Christmas

29. Software:

- a. Website
- b. E-newsletter provider

Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972, Sections 142 and 144

Recommendation:

- i) To note the report and provide any feedback / suggestions.*