

Communications Strategy

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Background

1. The Town Council has identified a need for a Communications Strategy to direct the how / where / when / what / who / why surrounding communications.

Strategic Objectives & Policy

2. This Communications Strategy aims to complement existing and proposed strategic objectives of the Town Council.
 - a. **Vision Statement for Thame 2050:** “Thame, a wellbeing town.” “By 2050, Thame will be a sustainable market town where well-managed change strengthens wellbeing, promotes community and provides opportunity for all generations.”
 - b. **Thame Neighbourhood Plan** (adopted 2025): “Thame must maintain its character as a real market town”
 - c. **Thame Green Living Plan** (adopted 2020): “A plan to protect and enhance our quality of life locally in the things that really matter – our air, our water, our overall well-being and the natural world that surrounds us.”
3. The council’s strategic objectives therefore can be summarised as community, wellbeing, environmental leadership, and preserving our market.

4. This strategy should be read in conjunction with other town council policies, in particular:
 - a. **Community Engagement policy** – This sets out how the council will effectively involve and engage individuals, community groups, businesses, and public bodies, in its decision-making. This policy and the Communications Strategy should be read together.
 - b. **Code of Corporate Governance policy** – This sets out the how the council will deliver its functions and relate to the community. This document will link closely to the council’s overall Strategy once created.
 - c. **Social Media & Media Relations policy** – This sets out the responsibilities and duties of council representatives when using social media and interacting with the press/media.
 - d. **Staff Handbook** – This contains sections that set out how staff should use social media as Officers of the Town Council.

Duties & Powers

5. **Local Government Act 1972, Section 142** – The power to provide information regarding the council’s services
6. **Equality Act 2010** – The council must have regard to the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) set out in the legislation.
7. **Localism Act 2011** – This sets out the principles which councils and councillors must uphold when carrying out their functions/services. The principles are: Selflessness; Openness and Inclusivity; Integrity; Accountability; Objectivity; Honesty; Leadership.
8. **Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity** – This requires council publicity to:
 - be lawful
 - be cost effective
 - be objective
 - be even-handed
 - be appropriate
 - have regard to equality and diversity
 - be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity

Communications Strategy

Research

9. In preparing this strategy, the Town Council has undertaken the following methods of internal and external engagement:
 - a. Interviews with council officers
 - b. Councillors survey
 - c. Residents survey

10. The strategy has also been prepared by collating data from:
 - a. Best practice and example Communications Strategies / Policies from other town councils of a similar or larger size.
 - b. A SWOT and PESTLE analysis of Town Council communications
 - c. Training courses
 - d. Internal/community workshops relating to the Strategy 2050
11. The following section covers the why, how, who, what, where and when of the Town Council's communications.
 - a. **Why** – This covers the communication strategy's objectives
 - b. **How** – This covers how the strategy should be implemented
 - c. **Who** – This covers the demographic and stakeholders; the people and groups we aim to reach with our communications.
 - d. **What** – This covers our branding, identity, tone, and messaging.
 - e. **Where** – This covers the methods of communications.
 - f. **When** – This covers the timings and timelines of communications.

Why? (Objectives)

12. **Proactive & Prepared:** To forward-plan communication requirements (where possible) to engage at an early stage (proactive). To provide capacity and a defined approach to respond to reactive matters. To have a strategy for handling council responses to sensitive or controversial subjects.
13. **Consistency:** A unified voice / tone / message provides clarity and helps to build trust.
14. **Content Strategy:** To utilise the wealth of experience and information held by councillors and council officers, by delivering information that strikes a balance between overloading and ensuring a message is not lost.
15. **Responsibilities:** To clearly and regularly communicate what the Town Council does for the people of Thame, and what the responsibilities of other authorities are. To provide examples of partnership working and of community in action.
16. **Information Hub:** To position the town council as a central point for local information. To provide accessible information (digital and non-digital) or signpost where people can find this. To continue to improve access to information and transparency of council work.
17. **Project Updates:** To improve / streamline the process of locating / receiving timely updates on project progress (internal and external). To have a database of previous project ideas and why they weren't progressed.
18. *Internal only:* **Channels:** To investigate more effective ways of communicating internally other than email, to ensure key messages are highlighted, easily locatable and not missed.

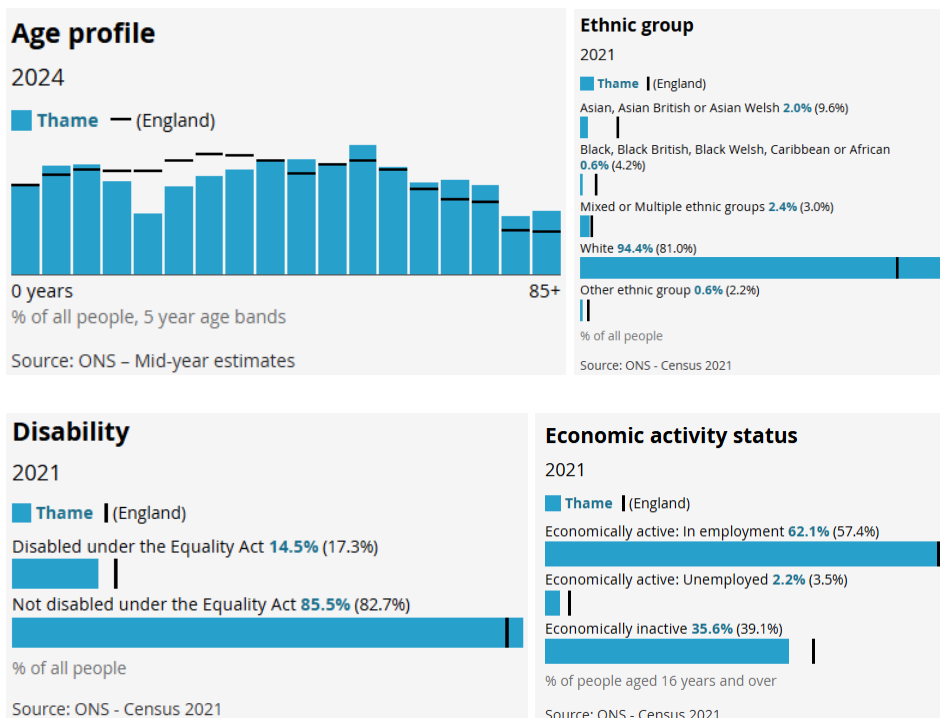
How? (Implementation)

1. All staff and councillors are responsible for adhering to this strategy in their own area of town council work (this includes internal communications).

2. All staff and councillors must adhere to the council's Social Media & Media Relations Policy which provides guidance on how/when responses should be made.
3. It is expected that the Communications Manager will be involved in strategic communications of larger projects, whilst smaller or routine projects & events will be managed and delivered by their respective teams in line with this strategy and any specific action plans.
4. Where possible, the Communications Manager should have oversight of internal and external communications where they relate to a new project / event / service / procedure, or which may be controversial or sensitive.
5. The Communications Manager and Communications Apprentice will be responsible for the implementation of the Annual Communications Delivery Plan ([Appendix C](#)).

Who? (Audience)

6. The Town Council does not collect demographic data about its users, however national / regional databases and statistics from social media platforms are available. Whilst this is just a snapshot of Thame's demographic, it provides some useful data to consider for communications. Different groups have different communications needs, so it is important to use a range of methods / channels to reach as many demographics as possible.
7. **Demographics** – Data taken from Census data¹ (2021 and 2024) and applies to the Parish of Thame: Population 13,500 and Households: 5,600.



¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/#E04008171>

Social Media – On Facebook our largest demographic of followers are women in the 35-54 age group.

8. Key Audiences / Stakeholders

- Residents (existing and prospective)
- Workers and employees
- Visitors
- Businesses (existing and prospective)
- Voluntary organisations and groups
- Government bodies / representatives, e.g. SODC, OCC and MP
- Charities and public sector bodies, e.g. Thames Valley Police, Rycote Practice and Sharing Life Trust
- Landowners and developers
- Local and regional media (press, radio and television)
- Town Councillors
- Council employees

Within each group there are likely to be sub-groups or communities, including ethnic minority communities, older, young and disabled people and vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

What? (Messaging & Values)

9. Brand Identity covers:

- Visual e.g. logo, colour scheme (how does TTC look?)
- Voice and tone (how does TTC sound?)
- Values and purpose (why does TTC exist?)
- Public perception (what do people think and feel about TTC?)

Brand identity and trust is built through consistency.

- Visual Identity** – The Town Council has a logo, colour palette (see below) and brand fonts (Martel / Martel Sans) that are used on TTC publications, whilst individual events and projects have their own branding styles. The Town Council’s logo and branding were updated in 2016 as part of the new website. This should be used on any graphics relating to Town Council projects/services, as well as internal matters such as presentations, reports and policies. A standard email signature format is provided for all staff and councillors.

Brand colours

Primary colours:

R: 0 G: 98 B: 174 #0062ae	R: 0 G: 62 B: 133 #003e85
R: 57 G: 154 B: 212 #399ad4	R: 100 G: 203 B: 187 #64cbbb
R: 0 G: 180 B: 156 #00b49c	R: 156 G: 216 B: 204 #9cd9ca

Secondary colours (option A):

R: 217 G: 26 B: 33 #d91a21	R: 89 G: 17 B: 128 #591180
R: 240 G: 90 B: 41 #f05a29	R: 152 G: 41 B: 189 #9829bd
R: 248 G: 182 B: 0 #fa200	R: 109 G: 156 B: 23 #8d9e17
R: 244 G: 205 B: 0 #fac00	R: 170 G: 189 B: 49 #aabd31
R: 209 G: 27 B: 98 #b11b58	

Greys:

R: 34 G: 34 B: 34 #222222
R: 89 G: 91 B: 93 #595b5d
R: 214 G: 214 B: 214 #d6d6d6
R: 244 G: 244 B: 244 #4f4f4f



A community flag competition was held in 2017. Whilst the flag (below) is inspired by the town council’s branding (colours and includes part of the emblem), it is a community flag. The three lines represent Thame’s connection to the countryside (green), the Phoenix Trail (white) and River Thame (blue).



- b. **Voice and Tone** – The Town Council’s tone will vary depending on the topic and channel being used, with a formal tone being more appropriate in certain situations. As a government body, the Town Council should always maintain a professional tone. The Town Council should also strive to have an approachable, helpful and friendly tone in its messaging. Readability is important and should be checked in line using tools such as the [Flesch Kincaid reading ease score](#).
- c. **Values and Purpose** – The [strategic visions of the council](#) and [Communications Strategy objectives](#) set out the values and purpose.
- d. **Public Perception** – Results from internal and external consultation highlighted the following three words as the most associated words with Thame Town Council:

Local - Community – Informative

The word cloud below shows the top 50 words. Whilst overall positive, it should be acknowledged that there are some negative associations around representativeness, purpose and priorities which the council should seek to address.








10. **Annual Communications Plan** – This document (Appendix C) is a calendar of the weekly / monthly / annual / seasonal communications of the Town Council, as well as ‘ad-hoc’ communications such as information about services. It also proposes a 7-day schedule of categories to communicate over a week.

Where? (Methods)

11. **External:** The Town Council uses a range of digital, printed and in person methods to communicate and/or promote town council services, events and news. Different methods should be used depending on what the purpose of the communication is.

12. In line with the strategic objective of environmental leadership, where possible printing should be minimised especially on non-recyclable materials, however consideration should always be given to ensuring that the choice of method(s) remains inclusive and accessible for the target audience.

13. The Internal Association of Public Participation identify five levels on a spectrum of participation². The table below has been adapted from this and Corsham Town Council’s Community Engagement Strategy³:

 <p>INFORM “Here’s what’s happening”</p>	 <p>CONSULT “Here are some options, what do you think?”</p>	 <p>INVOLVE “Here’s a problem, what ideas do you have?”</p>	 <p>COLLABORATE “Let’s work together to solve this problem.”</p>	 <p>EMPOWER “You care about this issue and are leading an initiative. How can we support you?”</p>
<p>Website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), newsletter, noticeboard, A-board, shopping guides, display banners / boards, town guide, Information Centre, email signatures</p>	<p>Surveys, budget questionnaire, council meetings, consultation events</p>	<p>Monthly councillors’ market stall, Annual Town Meeting / public meetings</p>	<p>Strategy workshops, Thame Alliance Group, Thame Business Forum, Environmental forum external organisation representatives, working groups, residents’ associations and partnership working with organisations / groups</p>	<p>Referendums, polls, seed funding / support for inaugural community events</p>

² [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#)

³ [Corsham Town Council’s Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2026](#)

14. **Internal** – weekly Officer team meetings, monthly Leadership Team meetings, monthly ‘whole team’ meetings, fortnightly Clerk/Mayor/Deputy Mayor meetings, emails, Teams, OneNote, WhatsApp.

When? (Timings and Timelines)

15. To communicate proactively the council should:
- Set expectations early – so people know how / when they can get involved, the options being considered (and why), what decisions will / won’t be made and why a decision is needed. This also helps to prepare people for difficult decisions.
 - Maintain communication through the decision making process, and avoid only communicating once a decision has been made. This avoids a narrative shaped by assumptions, rumours and frustration.
 - Plan ahead to create space for conversations and consistent messages.
16. When communicating in reactive situations the council should ensure communications are:
- considered and not rushed.
 - honest and compassionate, recognising that some matters will require a more sensitive approach.
17. Responding to comments / enquiries on social media should be done in accordance with the *Social Media & Media Relations Policy* noting in particular section 5.
18. Social media will only be monitored during working hours, which is made clear in the page descriptions and *Social Media & Media Relations Policy*. Content may be posted outside of those hours where scheduled or during events.

Monitor, Evaluate & Review

19. The Town Council ran its first communications survey in December 2025/January 2026 with the community and councillors/staff. It is intended to run this annually, and therefore it is also recommended that the Communications Strategy be reviewed annually following the results of this survey.
20. Below is a list of ways the Town Council monitors engagement and effectiveness of its communications (see also the *Community Engagement Policy*). A report is presented every 3 months to the Community Services committee.

	Method	Frequency
Outputs (tangible and easy to capture)	Information Centre – footfall, leaflet stock, enquiries	Monthly
	Survey responses	As and when surveys are run
	Social media / LinkTree engagement	Every 3 months
	E-newsletter subscribers	Every 3 months
	Newsletter (printed)	Weekly
	Website visitors (Google Analytics)	Every 3 months
	Attendees at events and meetings	As and when events / meetings are held
	Councillor/Mayor Market Stall	Monthly

Outcomes (immediate results)	Increased understanding of the topic/issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post event surveys. • Annual communications survey.
	Attitudinal change	
	Inspiration and creativity	
	Skills development	
Impacts (longer-term)	Changes in how people think, knowledge, understanding, attitude or awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual communications survey. • Monitoring trends / changes over time
	Changes in capacity, participation or skills	
	Changes in how things work, policies, behaviour or practices	

21. Suggested additional monitoring

- a. Interaction with newsletter (open rates) and specific items (click rates)
- b. Measuring customer satisfaction (e.g. using Net Promoter Score)
- c. Combining multiple datasets, for example comparing the online engagement of event publicity and the number of event attendees.
- d. Use website analytics against KPIs to track which webpages receive the most visitors and to review whether the content aligns with organisational objectives.

Appendix A – Weekly Newsletter Guidelines

- The newsletter is published weekly on Thursdays using Mailchimp
- The Communications Apprentice is responsible for creating the newsletter. The Communications Manager and Community Services Manager are responsible for reviewing content.
- Content should be provided by close of play on the Wednesday before publication.
- The newsletter is divided into sections
 - **News** – priority is given to town council news. Other news will be shared if it is Thame-based.
 - **Environmental News** – news provided by Environmental Project Officer / monthly Environmental Newsletter.
 - **What's On** – A space for community event posters for the coming 1-2 weeks
 - **Sport Fixtures** – Links to local sport club fixtures
 - **Council Meetings** – links to latest agenda (available on Wednesdays) and minutes
- Articles which promote a business or are not Thame-based will not be included.
- The newsletter should be produced in line with the Newsletter Procedure.

Appendix B – Noticeboard Rules

Montesson Square Noticeboard

This noticeboard is used to promote community events, activities, and information. It is updated weekly by Thame Town Council staff.

Terms & Conditions:

- Posters should be dropped into the Town Hall (maximum of 2 posters per event/group).
- Posters should be no larger than A4 size and not be laminated, so we can recycle them afterwards.
- Priority is given to events and groups based in Thame.
- Posters or promotional material for commercial businesses will not be displayed.
- Event posters will be displayed for a maximum of two weeks before the event date. Non-timebound posters will be displayed for a maximum of 1 month.



Appendix C – Annual Communications Delivery Plan

Available via WP.