

Agenda Item 5

For decision - Review of FTC's Communications Strategy and an update on marketing and communications

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Summary

This report recommends that a panel is established to review the FTC Communications Strategy. It also provides an update on the work of the FTC comms team since May.

FTC's Communication Strategy

The Marketing & Communication area of work both delivers projects within the strategic objectives of FTC and supports the rest of the FTC to deliver high quality communications and events. We have been working to a Communication Strategy that was last reviewed in February 2020, [this can be read on the website here](#). The current work programme indicates that a review of the Strategy will take place in January 2023. However, now that Cllrs have settled in and the corporate strategic direction is beginning to take shape, it is recommended that the Comms Strategy is reviewed in the next month instead. It is also recommended that a panel is established to carry out this review. The membership of the panel could include some expert members of the community alongside some Cllrs, members of the communications team and the Town Clerk.

Lastly, it is recommended that this panel reports back with a proposed revised comms strategy to the November Council meeting.

Recommendation

Establish a panel comprising a few councillors, members of the marketing and comms team and external experts - with a review and a return to council in November

For continuity, the remainder of the report retains the format of previous comms updates prior to the elections in May.

May 2022

Project wise the focus this month has been: Green Breather days, Climate Action Group meeting and Jubilee celebrations.

- 19 press releases in May and traffic to website traffic to the Frome Town Council website above average - hustings, Green breather days, the election results and the announcement of the new IfF councillors, which saw an increase in duration spent on the website
- The Annual Council Meeting saw engagement across all social channels with an inaugural lifetime achievement award. The meeting also saw the announcement of the

new Mayor Sara Butler and Deputy Mayor Philip Campagna and was the first for the newly elected councillors.

Social channels

- There were record levels of engagement on our FB channels during May largely around Green Breather Days (GBD) and Jubilee promotion with a 21 May saw the first GBD and engagement spiked with over 11k reach and 7k likes/link clicks on the post reviewing the day.
- Promotion for the Jubilee activities on 2 June was well received along with new Cllrs and the Community Fridge moving to the Town Hall. The Road Closure post was popular as usual along with was the final post of Mayor Andy Wrintmore.

Discover Frome

- The events page continues to be the most frequently visited with markets, shopping, things to do and town walks also falling into the top 10.
- PR included the Climate Film Festival, the Merlin's May programme, the Children's Festival and Photo Frome festival.
- Followers on both Instagram and Facebook have continued to increase with a good level of engagement – with the Somerset Day and ECOS amphitheatre posts getting the most interest.
- The Annual was published in collaboration with The List. Previously funded, this project was delivered by an ad and distribution to visitor centres across the southwest.

Engagement and events

- Delivery of the first Green Breather event - this was well received with lots of positive comments from both businesses and residents alike. However this was not universal.
- You tube increased participation including at Hustings at the Cheese and Grain, Council and Planning meetings to supporting projects such as The Climates Film Festival, Frome Busks and Somerset Retrofit Accelerator (SRA) project.
- 19 videos have been posted (the majority of which were supporting the SRA) with a total of 936 views across the month (662 attributed to SRA).

June 2022

Project focus this month: Jubilee celebrations, Green Breather days, Christmas and Remembrance Day road closures, Discover Frome Makers windows.

Events

- Pop up play sessions continued around the town in our parks and open spaces. These have been promoted locally via door drops and posters.
- The Platinum Jubilee celebrations saw over 1500 residents to join in activities and engagement incorporating the new accessible pathways and the plaque on the jubilee stone voted for by People's Budget Town Vote earlier in the year, as well as conversations around what people might like to see in the showfield.
- In the evening, to signify the lighting of the beacon, Reg Ling lit the Valentine Lamp on Catherine Hill. This was a smaller ceremony with the Mayor, a Piper, and Frome Town Band, was the lead story on the Beacon TV on BBC Points West.

- Other events promoted that month included the Working Lunch session, Earthwatch Science session with schools learning about how Tiny Forests can benefit both wildlife and people.
- Event management plans and road closures were written for Remembrance and the Christmas Lights Switch on.
- The second Green Breather Day was delivered with a sustainable and active transport theme. There was a real split in the community around this event designed to close the road allowing shoppers to experience the space in a different way. This proved divisive and councillors took the decision to cancel the rest of the events in the series. Although some people were disappointed this was seen as a broadly popular move listening to residents' concerns.
- Jubilee news posts and pages as the most visited in June
- The Green Breather Days posts provided the most reach on Facebook.
- Out of the 70 posts for the entire month, the 7 posts relating to GBD equated to 28% of the reach for the month.
- The most 'popular' post in the run up to the event, saw a reach of over 18k, over 6k clicks and 632 comments. The topic certainly got people talking on Facebook with interesting and mostly measured discussion around road closures and the need for action re climate change. There was also considerable discussion re impact for businesses.
- Energy Advice sessions and FTC job opportunities were also a highlight.
- The Jubilee activities and the associated album of images also really well received – although there was also a considerable amount of criticism around the perceived lack of bunting in the town for the Jubilee.

Discover Frome

The traffic to the website during June was about average although slightly lower than we might expect in the run up to the Frome Festival.

- The events page continued to be the most frequently visited with markets, shopping, things to do also staying in the top 10. New entries to the top 10 this month were the Frome Festival page and the Frome Beer & Cider event listing.
- Featured press included the Frome Festival, Frome Drama's new production and a round-up of local foodie events written by Hugh Thomas of the Wallfish Journal.
- Followers on both Instagram and Facebook continued to increase with the Rodden Meadow reel and Green Breather Day posts getting the most interest.
- The information point whilst going from strength to strength in terms of visitor numbers has struggled with volunteers and so promoting volunteer opportunities which would allow it to move back to the pre covid opening hours of 10 – 4pm in line with the Black Swan gallery times.

Discover Frome Makers

Designed to be one of a series of windows referring people back to the Discover Frome Information Point and our wealth of makers and funded by Mendip, the Discover Frome Makers window of the Post Office at the old co-op site in Westway was also delivered – masking the interior of the post office, it features young artist and makers at the beginning of

their professional maker's journey. The hope was that this may be replicated in other sites in the town but as, yet we have been unsuccessful in getting other owners on board.

July 2022

Project focus this month: Great Big Green Week, Cycle Sunday, Apple Day, Christmas.

With the arrival of summer holidays, the traction of engagement on our channels switches over July and through August to a focus on Discover Frome.

Events

- We continued to work closely with the Green and Healthy Futures team to collaborate on content to help with promotion of that programme but also with promotion of the conference which took place in July.
- Members of the comms team on hand to help on the day, the conference had "real time" coverage through our social channels, and it is hoped that we will be able to collaborate in this way on future Green and Healthy Future events.
- Pop up Play activities have continued to take place in the green spaces around town and are still very popular on social
- Energy sessions are continuing to be a focus of promotion ensuring information is readily available for residents.
- The July council meeting was viewed a record 196 times.
- With permission to change the dates and bring the Pump track Celebration and the Cycle Sunday in line with Great Big Green plans we were able to add value and increase our strategic objectives to support the celebration with a bike jumble, the ebikes, the peddle emporium activities and a missing links fun trail - this will be FTC's main contribution to the Great Big Green Week programme – where otherwise we are supporting others.

Website

- This month we wrote 21 press releases supporting setting up a new volunteer group delivering Energy Advice alongside the resilience team, the need for additional hosts for refugee families, support for Frome in Bloom, and promoting Play Day.
- There has been an increase in traffic on the FIND (Family Information and Networking Directory) directory, primarily for holiday activity providers and things to do for 0-5 year olds
- We have also seen encouraging traffic to our job opportunities page on the FTC site with summer intern jobs being advertised, along with energy advisor and Discover Frome volunteer roles, as well as the Environment Manager position.
- Finally, the end of July saw the publishing of this year's Great Big Green Week programme, the week takes place 11 – 18 September and will see a host of events and activities promoting Frome's response to the climate emergency and exploring our green and open spaces.

Social

- There was lots of collaboration with the Frome Festival and cross promotion of events taking place across the town but with a focus on the events at the Town Hall and across our parks.

- The Rangers, as ever, proving especially popular with posts highlighting the newly installed table tennis table at Welshmill, their creative designs at the Showfield,
- and announcing that the original Ranger has become a national scything champion.

August 2022

Project Focus: Great Big Green week, Cycle Sunday, Apple Day, Christmas, Walking Festival.

Although August is ordinarily a quiet month due to the summer holidays; we have seen some major news stories out of character for the season.

- At the beginning of the month, the deal to secure the ground at Frome Town Football Club was announced, this led to a spike in traffic to the website.
- Along with the activity supporting Mayday Saxonvale with news releases and associated social posts, this has increased activity to the site in a normally quiet month
- Our Instagram account handle from @fromecommunity to @frometowncouncil securing this for the future. We will still use #fromecommunity
- And in an effort to appeal to Instagram's algorithm and for posts to be more widely seen, the team have increased their reel content (short films) specifically for the platform. These can then be repurposed on other channels too.
- FTC's summer intern Rella Jefferies created content for our social channels over the summer. Both the "Frome pays it forward," and Love your parks week, were highlights

Events and engagement

Events and meetings are an important way to engage with the town and are important for bringing people together, to share, learn, celebrate, and feel supported and heard, and to that end are used widely across the team – we support through production of collateral ticketing press and

- The Resilience Team have been hosting their Summer Wildlife Activities programme which included butterfly counts, pond dipping and learning about pollinators. Each event has been sold out and attendees have been learning to add to the Community Mapping Project via the iNaturalist app – over the course of the last 3 months, almost 400 new observations have been added, mainly because of these sessions.
- Playday promotion was well attended, in collaboration with the library this year.
- Promotion for Great Big Green Week campaign is well under way, from newsletters, direct emails, posters, social, press releases, banners and distributing brochures as well
- As supporting collateral for the upcoming Football Club meeting on October 3.
- Work is now well underway preparing for the Discover Frome Makers market at the Round Tower to support the towns Christmas Promotions as well as planning for the November Events, Christmas Lights Switch On, Remembrance Day Parade, and the Walking festival.
- Frome has been in the news in August, not only coverage in Somerset Life magazine, including councillors appearing on BBC Somerset to cover topics such as Mayday Saxonvale and our Energy Advice sessions.

- Since reporting we have published 14 newsletters. The Neighbourhood Network and Clerks Update newsletters all received over 50% open rates with a click rate of 7.5% rate, with the Volunteer Newsletter reaching 65% open rate
- And have set up ticketing and collateral for 15 up-coming meetings or events.

Discover Frome

New featured posts on the DF website during August promoted the PB funded Children's Festival, Great Big Green Week, Frome Lit Fest, Emergence Festival as well as an August event round up.

- Visitor numbers as would be expected were the highest so far this year with the most frequently visited pages being the events listings, markets, shopping, and Children's Festival event page.
- Follower numbers continue to increase on both Facebook and Instagram with the Frome Lit Fest promo proving popular on both. The Love Parks and Discover Frome volunteers reels also had really strong engagement.
- Work continues to support our volunteers at the Information Point as the point has received record visitor numbers, in part down to the well-respected Black Swan Arts open. The move will be reviewed at the end of the September.
- We have produced a new tourist map – highlighting to our visitors the shopping streets, parks and open spaces, the venues, ebike hire, and the You're Welcome scheme in a tear off sheet.

In conclusion

It has been a really busy Summer and we are now preparing for the winter ahead. This area of work both delivers projects within the strategic objectives of FTC and supports the rest of the team to deliver high quality communications and events. The last few months have delivered considerable challenges particularly for our social channels and the subsequent review will ensure that we are on track regarding the Communication Strategy.