

Agenda item 4

For decision - Marketing and Communications - Communicating with us
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Summary

To look at the results of our ‘Communicating with us’ project, and to identify themes, actions and recommendations.

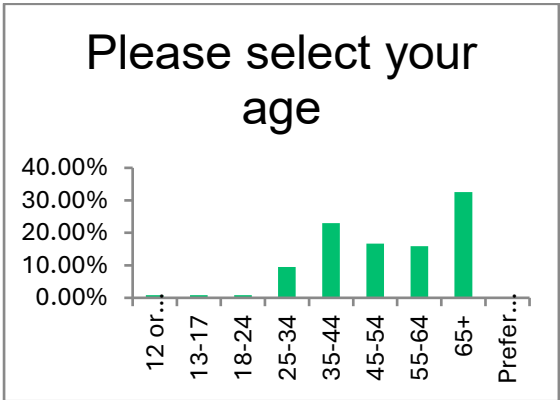
Background

What we did

In summer 2025, Frome Town Council invited residents to share their views on how well informed they feel about council activities and decisions. Called ‘Communicating with us’ the survey was open to all and available online, with press release, posters and social media posts used to encourage participation. The ‘Communicating with us’ survey was adapted from the Local Government Association’s ‘Who Reads What’ survey, aiming to ascertain how people find information about their local council, and how they would like to do so. You can find the survey on our website www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/have-your-say-on-how-ftc-keeps-you-informed/insert

How we did it

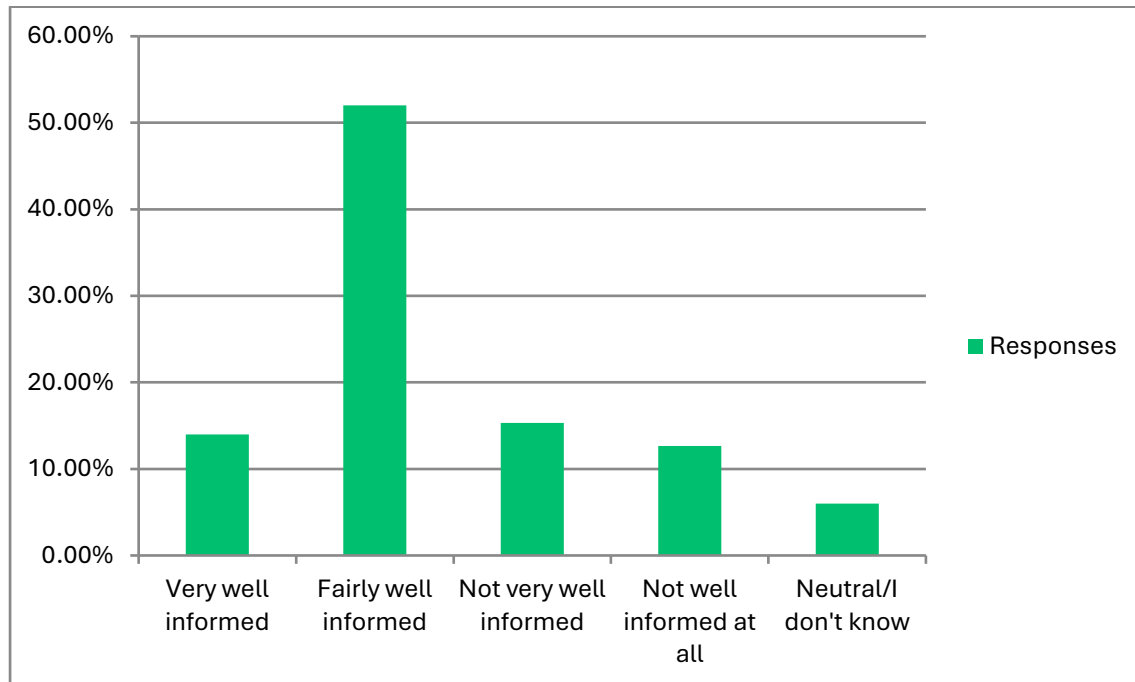
Responses were collected through SurveyMonkey, via the website, social media and a number of ‘pop-up’ engagements, designed to capture the opinion of a broad range of residents. The survey combined multiple-choice questions with space for residents to give their own comments. This allowed us to collect both data and personal feedback. A total of 150 people took part, giving us a snapshot of community opinion.



The 150 respondents to date represent a fairly balanced age demographic, although slightly weighted towards older people (see chart) and we have engaged with young people through the young person’s engagement activity earlier in the year and have separate channels and feedback mechanisms for engaging with young people.

Findings

Q1. Overall, how well informed do you feel about Frome Town Council and our work?



66% of respondents feel very or fairly well informed. 28% feel not very well informed or not well informed at all. 6% are neutral or unsure.

The responses were therefore varied and ranged from -

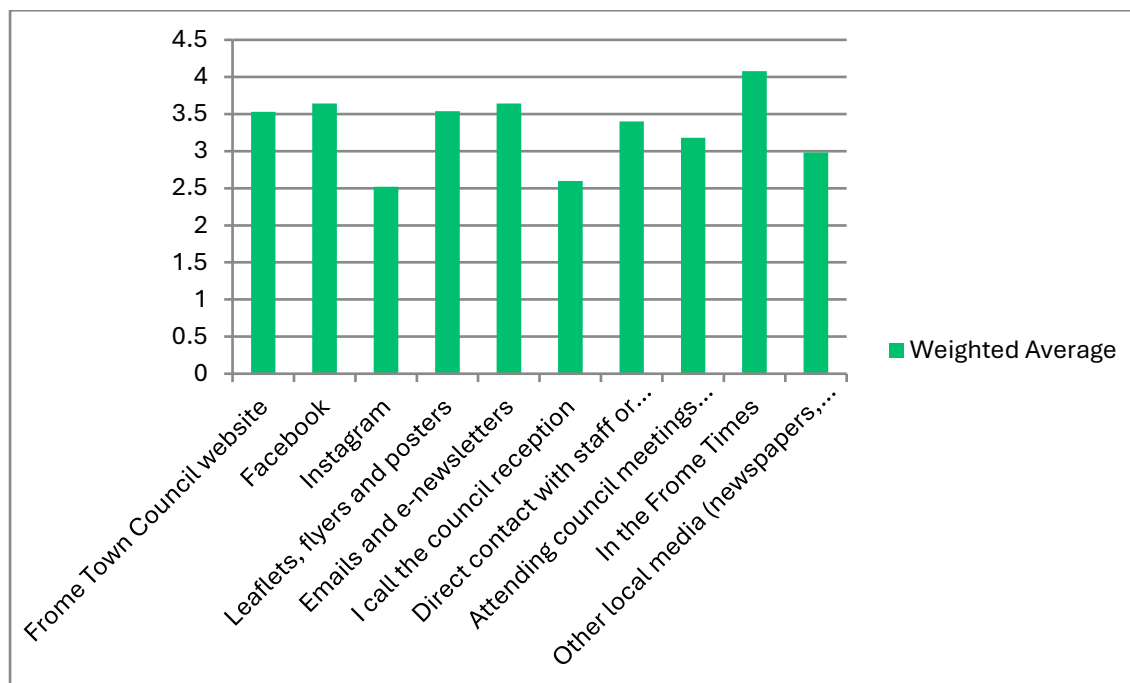
'Always very responsive - fantastic front desk team'

'Easier to be in touch with local concerns in Frome than anywhere else I've lived.'

'Council information easily found on website, although some pages seem to be out of date.'

'I don't feel fully informed about Council strategies and how these inform funding decisions. For example, I heard recently that funds are allocated each year for marking International Women's Day. If that's the case, who chooses how these funds are spent and how could local groups influence that? Sometimes it feels like there's money set aside for certain activities and groups and not others.'

Q2. Where do you find information about Frome Town Council and our work at the moment? Please give each method you use a score from 1 to 5, where 5 is very useful.



Question 2 asked people where they currently get their information about FTC. And as you can see the clear front runners is the Frome Times, followed by Facebook, the FTC website, e-newsletters and flyers, posters and leaflets. The fortnightly Frome Matters e-newsletter also had several specific mentions in narrative feedback:

I try to watch the videos of council meetings; I look up things on the FTC website and try to keep up to date with Facebook posts. I also subscribe to Frome Matters and read the Frome Times.'

'I receive the bi-weekly newsletter and follow articles in the Frome Times. I haven't attended meetings either in person or online but that is my choice.'

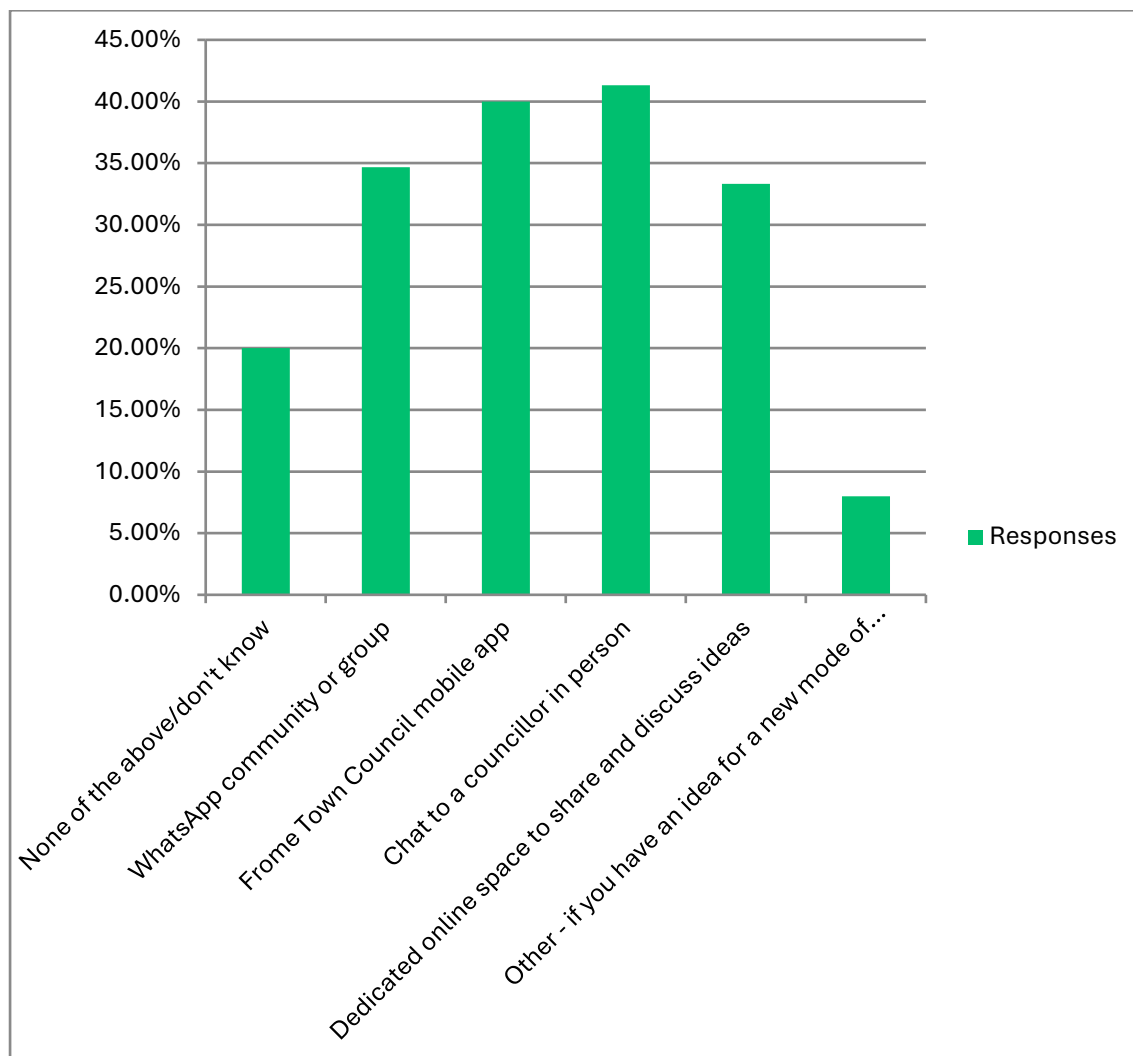
The Marketing and Communications team has already changed its approach to Instagram earlier in 2025, partly in response to changes in the algorithm that favour video content significantly, but also because our metrics indicated that it was of less value to residents as an information source than Facebook. That is borne out by the survey, although it is clearly still worth our while being on the platform, we generally mirror content now.

Appetite for direct, face-to-face contact was evident throughout the survey.

'More person to person contact eg - drop in clinic at library'

It's reasonable to deduce that the fairly high weighted average for attending council meetings/events is weighted towards events, given the low footfall at council meetings and low number of watchers on YouTube (with the exception of the Badgers Hill meeting). In hindsight these should have been separate criteria and we will change that to offer them as separate options if we repeat this exercise.

Q3. Would you use the following methods to get in touch, if available to you? (Tick any you would use)

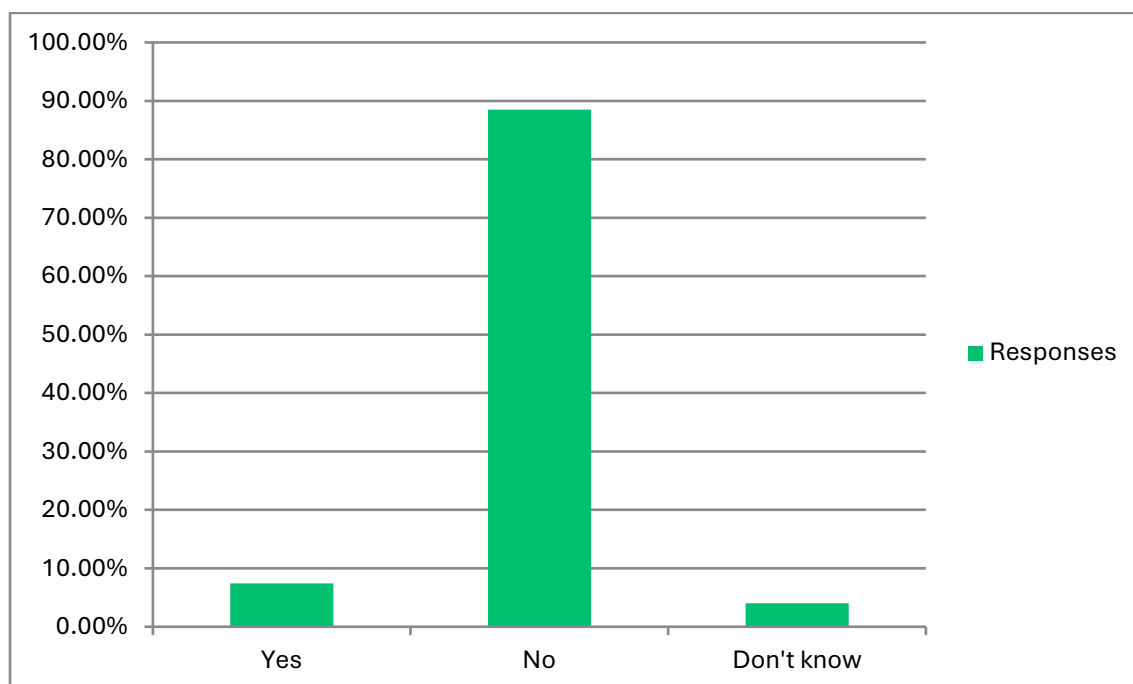


Question 3 offered options for new/additional communications channels: Other suggestions included more drop-in clinics, dedicated contacts for business/retail, and more community workshops. From the additional comments it was obvious that most people didn't understand what a digital platform was and so we will allocate additional time to bringing people on board and helping Frome get behind using the platform.

This comment supports the concept of the democratic platform:

'When the council is confronted with an issue that is likely to raise criticism -e.g. Market Square toilets or the removal of the ramp near Henley Way, it could call a citizens assembly to either prompt practical alternatives or to help validate its decision.'

Q4. Have you ever wanted to make contact with the council and not been able to?



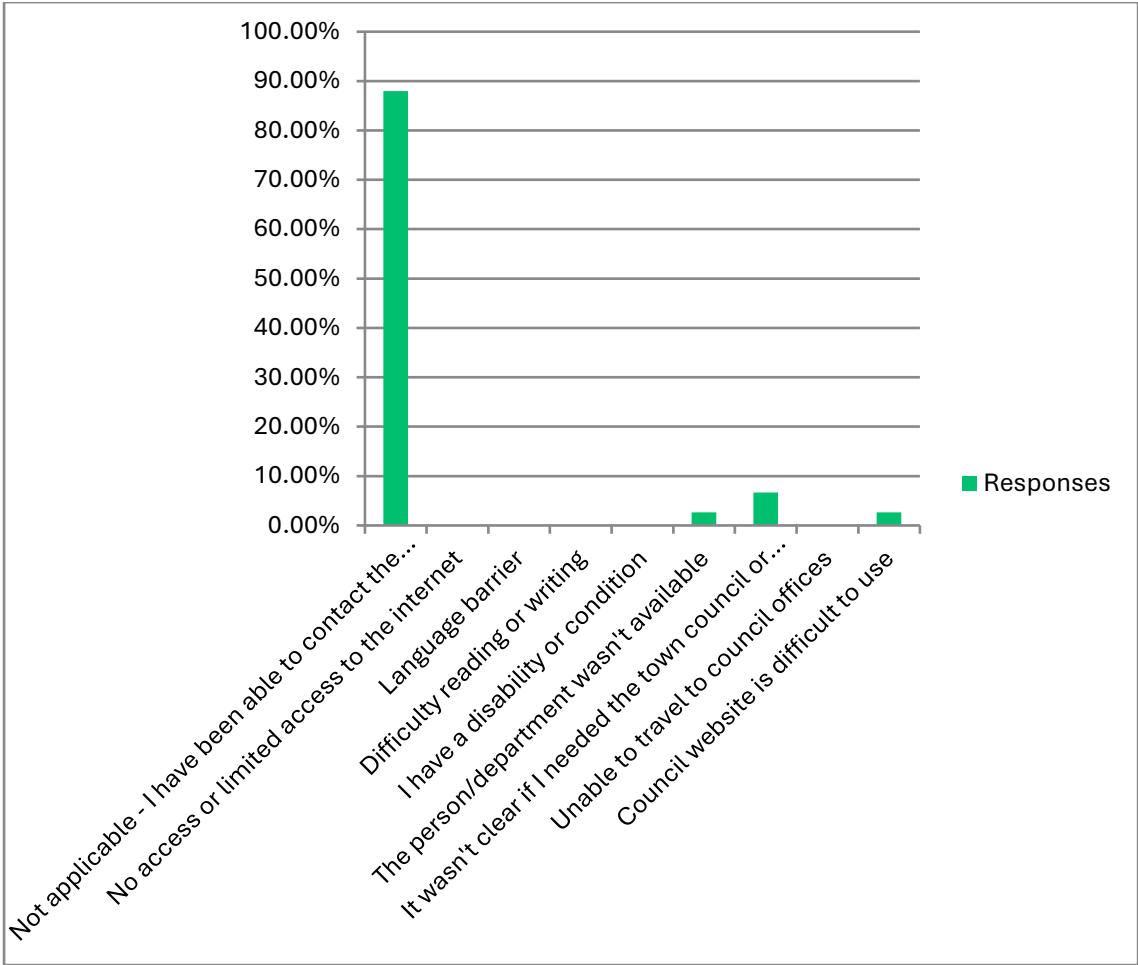
The good news is that 89% of respondents said they have never had a problem contacting FTC which also speaks to ease of contact and few barriers to access Nevertheless, the following were mentioned as barriers and it is important to be mindful of maintaining good quality provision and infographics to explain what is within Frome Town council's remit.

4a. If you answered 'yes' above, please tell us why.

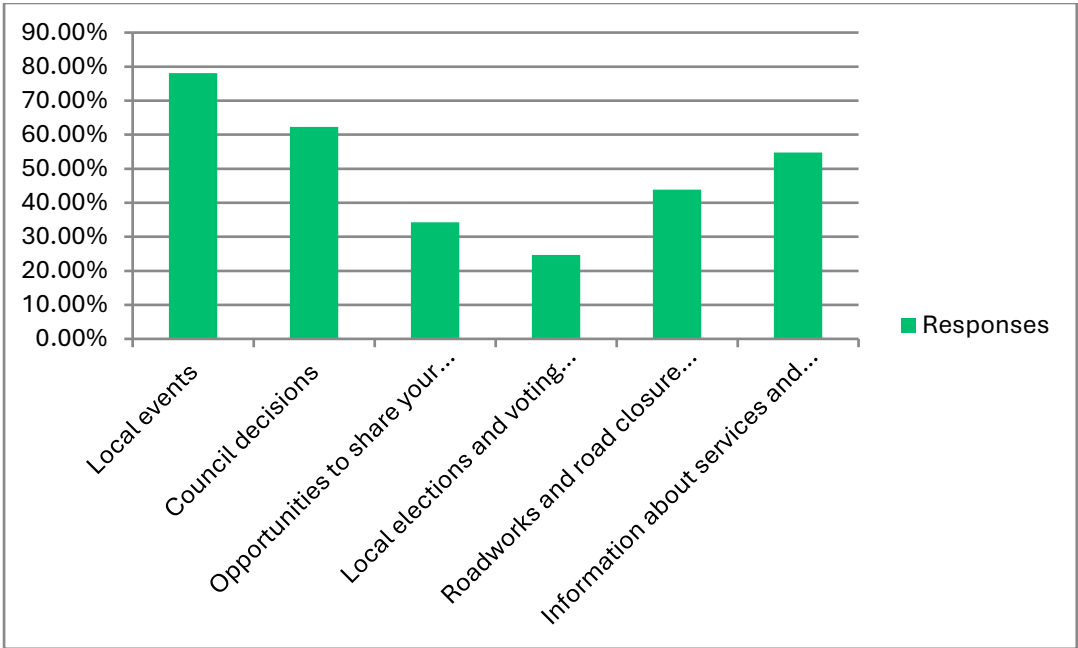
Anecdotally there were a few key reasons:

- Information can be hard to find or out of date on the FTC website.
- There is confusion about Town Council and Somerset Council responsibilities – this appears to have been the reason why people felt they had struggled to contact FTC.

'People will express their views of the council, but not necessarily directly to the council or to councillors. Obviously the council can't (and probably shouldn't) attempt to respond directly to every individual, but it would be good if people could share direct criticism or 'alternative solutions' to what may be perceived as FTC's fault, that they come across which looks as though it requires consideration, so that such concerns might be seen to be discussed. Kind of like indirectly posing a question from the public at the council meetings.'



Q5. What topics would you be most interested in hearing about from the council? (Select up to three.)



The top three topics most readily identified matched what our own metrics tell us:

- Local events (78%)

- Council decisions (62%)
- Services/support in Frome (55%)

Other things people are keen to hear about from FTC include roadworks, opportunities to share thoughts, local elections, climate issues, and council finances.

Other comments and themes

The final question regarding gave residents an opportunity to share their experiences of Frome Town Council's communications and we heard both positive and negative with only 35/% of respondents taking up the opportunity.

Positive feedback

Many residents recognised the council's active approach to communication and valued the variety of channels used, the council's openness and staff helpfulness.

"Frome feels very vibrant and the council is really involved — much better than other places!"

"I see lots of posters and Facebook posts, so I usually know what's going on."

"I watch the videos of council meetings and read Frome Matters — there are plenty of ways to keep up to date."

"Easier to be in touch with local concerns in Frome than anywhere else I've lived."

"Keep doing the simple things well. Don't forget what most people appreciate - clean streets, safe town, clear signposting to people who can help, honesty and integrity, open, realistic plans."

Challenges and frustrations

Some residents expressed concerns about accessibility, clarity, and the balance of information shared.

"Some things take a bit too long to find or read up on."

"I don't always feel fully informed about council strategies and funding decisions."

"I often feel overwhelmed — there's too much information to keep up with."

"I don't really pay attention to what the council does, so I don't always see the updates."

Suggestions for improvement

Residents offered constructive ideas to help make communication clearer, more consistent, and more inclusive.

"It would be great to get an email with updates that are relevant to the business community."

"I know about the website, but I prefer face-to-face contact — sometimes I don't know what to ask online."

"Please don't rely only on social media, not everyone uses it."

"Clearer, simpler language would make things easier to follow."

*'I think we have a good council with good staff who do their best.'
'Excellent keep up the good work. Thank you for all your hard work for the community.'*

Negative comments included:

'You are invisible, but we all have to suffer the consequences of your poor decisions.'

'No communication whatsoever'

This table represented a summary of our most valued communication channels

Rank	Channel	Weighted Average	Notes
1	Frome Times	4.08	Most valued, broad reach
2	Emails/e-newsletters	3.64	Highly valued, direct updates
2	Facebook	3.64	Highly valued, especially for updates
4	Leaflets/Posters	3.54	Still important for many
5	FTC Website	3.53	Useful, but some usability issues

What residents told us

Overall, responses are remarkably consistent. People feel generally well informed by FTC, although there is some confusion about the division of responsibilities with Somerset Council. The Frome Times, noticeboard network, e-newsletters and Facebook are the most used and most valued communications channels.

It proved challenging to gauge enthusiasm about the democratic platform without specific examples or people's prior knowledge of similar platforms, but the need for further engagement and thorough onboarding around such a platform has been clearly identified. There is an appetite for more face-to-face contact with both councillors and staff.

The survey remains open and we will take further opportunities to broaden the data set as we progress through the year – using it to evaluate some of the new initiatives that it has highlighted.

What happens next

The results of this snapshot have led us to a number of preliminary conclusions about changes we will make as well as supporting what we have been doing already or actions that are already in place – we will feed these conclusions into the new work programme:

- We will continue investing in copy for the Frome Times, email newsletters, and Facebook as primary communication channels, operating an omnichannel presence
- We will improve website usability and ensure that information is up to date.
- Explore new channels such as WhatsApp broadcast channel using existing assets
- Increase opportunities for in-person contact, although not necessarily use council meetings as this mechanism. Perhaps Cllrs should explore regular surgeries.
- Clarify council responsibilities and make it easier to know who to contact for what and particularly which council does what
- Ensure that people who are not online can still stay informed.
- And review progress over the coming year and look for further ways to improve how we communicate with residents to include the onboarding of the digital platform.

Recommendations

1. To delegate to the Marketing and Communication Manager to review the marketing and communication strategy and ensure that implementation is in line with this reports conclusions
2. Scope out a new website
3. Continue to develop a digital engagement platform and develop a plan of delivery and engagement with onboarding advice and support from the team at Go Vocal