



# **Weymouth Town Council Communications Strategy**

## **Version 1, February 2024**

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### 1. Introduction

This strategy outlines our approach to delivering planned communications and marketing activity to support the Council to deliver its existing aims and priorities identified in the [Corporate Strategy](#):

- A town to be proud of, that looks clean and attractive and has something for everyone.
- An aspirational town where people have the opportunities to improve, learn, and earn.
- An accessible town where you can access services and amenities regardless of ability, age, or need.
- A prosperous town where year-round events and activities bring in visitors and increase economic opportunities.
- A green town that reduces its carbon footprint year on year and seeks to protect nature.

This approach will help to ensure that our residents and other stakeholders understand what services and projects the Council is responsible for delivering, while underpinning where communications resources will be focused. The Communications Strategy is relevant to all functions and service areas of the Council.

### 2. Current context

Weymouth Town Council was set up in April 2019 and currently has 25 serving councillors representing a population of around 53,000. Since being established, the Council has gone through some organisational changes to align staffing resources with service delivery.

In 2022, a Communications Audit was implemented reviewing current communications practices and where any improvements could be made. Following this audit, a set of brand guidelines were developed to maintain a consistent brand identity for the Council. A website audit was also carried out with improvements implemented to meet with accessibility standards, and website speed, and a new provider was sourced to manage the ongoing maintenance and support contract. Social media accounts were consolidated to six main channels across corporate and Visit Weymouth on X, Instagram, and Facebook, and managed by the Communications Team via a scheduling tool. A Media Policy was also developed and adopted by Full Council in 2023.

### 3. Our Communication Aims

Our key communication aims are to enhance the reputation of the Town Council by proactively promoting services and celebrating successes that make Weymouth a place where everyone is proud to live, work, play, and visit. To ensure that the information we communicate is timely, accurate, responsive, and relevant to the audience we are communicating to. To build on the proactive media relations developed to date and ensure balanced reporting about the work of the Council, including policies, decisions, and procedures. To maintain a consistent brand identity for the Council, and to develop the internal communications offer within the Council. Raise awareness of the Council's work on the climate and ecological emergency, while supporting communities to do the same. We will also inform residents about key outcomes achieved since declaring a climate and ecological emergency.

### Communications Objectives

We aim to communicate our objectives effectively and engage different audiences to get involved in and have their say on local issues, so that we can ensure the Council’s decisions are representative of both residents and organisations in the area:

- Promote the services the Council provides and opportunities for involvement including consultations.
- Promote understanding of Council aims and priorities decided by Councillors through a strong narrative to residents around what the Council stands for.
- Protect the reputation of the Council by effectively managing relationships with press, broadcast, and digital media to enhance perceptions of the Council and the town, responding with timely information to requests as needed.
- Provide engaging digital content for residents and visitors to support wider marketing activity across our existing digital channels.
- Weymouth Town Council is a community-focused Council committed to supporting the work of voluntary and community groups who benefit Weymouth residents. Through our communications, we will work with community development to promote the availability of grants, networking events and community events, develop a dedicated community web page, and provide a regular social media slot for sharing relevant news and funding opportunities.
- Raise awareness of the Council’s work on the climate and ecological emergency, while supporting communities to do the same. The Communications Team will publicise updates on key milestones achieved towards making the Council’s activities net zero carbon by 2030. Ensure our communications reflect key messaging on this important work area that cuts across the work of the Council.

**4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

The following table sets out the KPIs for the Communications Team:

KPI	Target	How is this analysed?	Aims
Residents thinking positively of the Council as a whole.	80 per cent	Annual Residents' Survey. Update survey for this year to ask specific question about overall how positively residents view the Council.	To ensure Comms supports the positive reputation of the Council through regular output of positive news stories.
Increase followers on Instagram.	Aim to increase followers across Instagram by 50 per cent in 2024.	Create like, share, follow competitions to encourage engagement and monitor growth rate. Track engagement and analytics through reporting tool on social media scheduling software. Weekly and monthly analysis / reporting.	The aim of this KPI is to widen our audience by increasing followers on our Instagram accounts.
Increase subscriptions to our YouTube channel	Increase the number of subscribers by at least 25 per cent by the end of 2024, increasing to 50 per cent in 2025.	Promote Weymouth Town Council's YouTube channel on corporate social media platforms and encourage more people to subscribe. Monitor subscription rates on a weekly basis through regular communications meetings.	The aim is to increase the number of people actively viewing council meetings to help increase understanding of what the town council is responsible for delivering and keeping more residents up-to-date about key decisions. A secondary aim is to use the platform to share other content including videos on various Council topics.
Monitor open rate of refreshed Town Clerk's Weekly Insight email to staff and Councillors	Set benchmark of 50 per cent open rate for refreshed e-newsletter and monitor open rates on a weekly basis to assess benchmark target and any new targets that need to be set for 2025.	Weekly monitoring using the platform's analytics.	The aim of this KPI to provide staff and councillors with a refreshed format, assess open rates and track what content is working well, where improvements can be made.

## 5. Approach to communications and marketing

The Communications Team will proactively source and develop communications and marketing opportunities, including innovative use of social media to ensure constant and diverse positive messaging.

The Communications Team will support and provide advice to departments on communications and marketing activity to best promote Weymouth Town Council services in a clear, consistent, and timely way.

Communications activity will be coordinated centrally by the Communications Team to ensure a joined-up approach to publicising key committee decisions, new policies, and successes. A mix of communications will be used to tell the Council's story including traditional and online media, marketing, online, offline, advertising, and internal communications to reach different audiences about the work of the Council.

Our approach to **media relations** is set out in the Council's [Media Policy](#), which was adopted in 2023. The Communications Team will lead on implementing the agreed policy and deliver a proactive and reactive media relations service to build on and enhance the Council's reputation. The team will work collaboratively with Staff and Councillors to support this implementation. Support will be given to Councillors and Staff to prepare for any media interviews which have been agreed.



The team will provide guidance on **crisis management** and **reputational issues**, and work with relevant external partners on any issues which require a multi-agency response.

**Marketing** requests from colleagues should be discussed with the Communications Team at the earliest opportunity so that any supporting materials, including **design work** for posters and social media assets can be scheduled in advance to meet competing deadlines within the available resources. The Communications Team will work with departments to plan marketing assets for larger scale events or projects which require any external graphic design work to be sourced.

The Communications Team will provide guidance on **brand management** to ensure there is a consistent approach to the Weymouth Town Council brand in line with the Council's brand guidelines.

It is important that our **internal communications** are developed to meet the needs of our One Council approach. An intranet site where both Staff and Councillors can access relevant information on policies, announcements, and updates centrally will be progressed in line with enhancements to IT. The Communications Team will also support the Town Clerk with an annual staff survey.

**Digital communications** activity is now spread across three social media platforms used to reach different audiences on corporate and Visit Weymouth channels – Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram. We welcome public engagement and use these channels as a tool to invite views, feedback, and ideas from the Weymouth community to help build on our two-way communications. The team will explore social media options as these networks develop. The Communications Team is also responsible for updating **website** content in line with plain English and accessibility guidelines. The website is also where the team share news, press releases, statements, and relevant images to promote the work of the Council all in one place. There is also a corporate You Tube Channel and LinkedIn profile.

The Communications Team will provide support at key **Council events**. Wherever possible, a member of the Communications Team will attend and lead on Comms. If attendance is not possible, the team will support Staff who are attending to provide **photography** and / or video footage. As well as promoting the key Council events, the Communications Team will work with the Resort Team to identify and publicise details of other events that take place on Council land or assets.

An **image library** will also be maintained to ensure our digital communications activities are supported with appropriate images which the Council has secured appropriate consent to use.

A regular Council **newsletter** will be produced on a quarterly basis to support the ongoing work of promoting good news stories, policies, and service announcements.

The Communications Team will also provide support and guidance on carrying out **consultations**, draft relevant materials and promote surveys and consultations, using a mix of online and offline channels.

To help promote **community projects** that the Town Council is involved with, the Communications Team will also work collaboratively with Community and Friends' groups, as well as the Community Development Officer to shine a light on initiatives which benefit Weymouth residents.

## **6. Communication channels, audience, and tone**

*"What do you want to say to your audience and how should you tailor your message?"*

We will use a combination of online and offline channels to reach different audiences about the work of the Council.

### **Audiences**

Our audiences include but are not limited to:

- Residents ● Business community ● Community / voluntary groups / charity sector
- Councillors ● MP ● Government ● Staff
- Partner organisations - including Dorset Council, Dorset Police, colleges.
- Media - on and offline, local, national and trade
- Visitors / holiday makers

## Communication channels

Channel	Digital or traditional	Audience	Notes
Website	Digital		
Facebook - corporate	Digital	Followers: 7.1k followers	
X (Twitter) - corporate	Digital	1,381 followers	
Instagram - corporate	Digital	1,839 followers	
Facebook – Visit Weymouth	Digital	9.3k followers	
X (Twitter) – Visit Weymouth	Digital	1,117 followers	
Instagram – Visit Weymouth	Digital	3,692 followers	
YouTube	Digital	58 subscribers	Used to livestream council meetings.
Facebook group	Digital	<a href="#">Tumbledown</a> : Over 1k members	
Newsletter	Digital	E-newsletter	Quarterly
Insight	Digital	E-newsletter	Weekly
Outreach	Traditional		Via community development, frontline workers including services which engage with the public, either directly or via partners, as trusted voices to share key council messaging.
Assets including noticeboards that we own	Traditional		Located in Weymouth parks, at the beach office, and at Commercial Road.
WTC Councillors	Traditional / Digital		Direct contact with residents, or via respective social media accounts and other comms channels.
Media	On and offline		
Advertising drums and banners	Offline		As well as space for external advertisers, the drums also provide opportunities to promote the work of the Council, particularly key Council events.

## Tone of voice

Press releases provide a more formal way to communicate news and announcements about the Town Council's work. Social media is less formal, providing more of a 'chatty' style to help humanise the Council's messaging. The use of jargon and acronyms will be avoided.

## **7. Resources and forward planning**

The Communications Team will work with service managers to plan communications and marketing activity over the year with key communications activities and any campaigns. This is mapped out in a [Marketing Plan](#) which is a live document covering Council meetings and committee decisions, key events, etc across the different services which will be regularly reviewed and updated by the team.

## **8. Measurement and evaluation**

The Communications Strategy will be reviewed annually in line with the agreed KPIs and updated where appropriate to meet any changing priorities.

The team will monitor progress during regular comms meetings, carry out daily media monitoring and weekly reporting, provide web and social media analytics, and provide reporting to the Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.