

**Community Services Committee**

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<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Communications and Community Engagement</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>10 September 2024</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager</b>

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To receive a report on Town Council communications and community engagement.

**Compliments & Complaints**

2. The report for 1 July 2024 – 31 January 2025 will be provided at the February committee meeting.

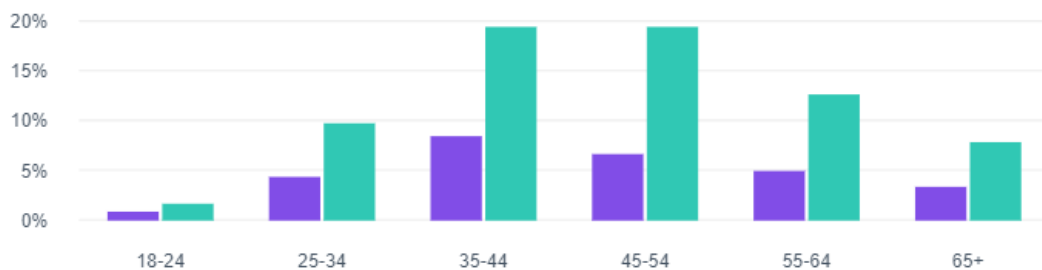
**Social Media**

3. Current figures show Thame Town Council has:

- Facebook followers – 2,345 up from 2.2k in July 2024 (7% increase)  
 In August TTC had 2,494 reactions, 472 comments, and 92 shares.  
 The make-up of our Facebook page is primarily women in the 35-54 age group. The Comms Officer (maternity cover) believes it highlights a need for the Council to find ways to communicate with Thame’s 55+ residents who do not receive the newsletter or use social media.

**Age and gender**

■ Men 29.10%  
■ Women 70.90%



- Instagram followers – 521 up from 484 in July 2024 (8% increase)

Audience reach (the number of unique users who saw posts, regardless of whether they engaged) on both Facebook and Instagram substantially increased in August:



4. Individual event sites have:
  - Thame Town Awards – 471 followers (Facebook)
  - Taste of Thame – 941 followers (Facebook), 356 followers (Instagram)
  - Thame Art Crawl – 708 followers (Facebook) 1,003 followers (Instagram)
  - Christmas in Thame — 1.9k followers (Facebook)
  - Thame Local Produce Market – 893 followers (Facebook)
  
5. Since July, the top posts on TTC’s Facebook page have been:
  - Installation of public water drinking fountain (506 likes)
  - Congratulations to Chris Hurdman on becoming a Veterans Award finalist
  - Town Awards winners
  - Councillors cycling to Montesson – link to BBC story
  - Notice to residents about travellers on the rec ground
  
6. Since July, TTC’s top posts shared to Love Thame, a local site with 17k followers, have been:
  - Installation of public drinking water fountain (735 likes, 50 comments)
  - Chris Hurdman nomination for Veterans Award (237 likes, 35 comments)
  - ‘Thank you, Thame’ for patience & support post after travellers’ left rec ground (194 likes, 60 comments)
  - Public notice about travellers on rec ground (155 likes, 37 comments)
  - Thame Town Awards winners (138 likes, 14 comments)
  - Oxford United considering game day bus to Thame (73 likes, 36 comments)
  - Vandalism post about public artworks (59 likes, 12 comments)
  - Congratulations to Adam Simcox for cross channel swim (55 likes)

## Newsletter

7. Current figures show Thame Town Council currently has 1,475 weekly newsletter subscribers up from 1,457 in July 2024.
  
8. Since mid-May, the newsletter has been produced by the Comms Officer (maternity cover).

## Website

9. The Comms Officer (maternity cover) has been working with Connect to reintroduce a Latest News slider to the front page of the website and modernise the site’s buttons to help freshen the overall appearance (using allocated support time). They have further

updated the front page with easy-access links to the news, council services LinkTree, the Thame Good Neighbour Scheme, Walking Trails and Midsomer information.

## Events

10. **September Fair** – A webpage will feature on TTC website this year which fair-goers will be able to access via a QR code, which will be promoted through our social channels and on the Information Centre A-Frame etc. The webpage will feature emergency contacts, links to the Showman's Guild, lost children/property details, medical details, a crime prevention warning/scam awareness, public toilet locations, citizens advice etc.
11. **Thame Art Crawl** – Artist nominations closed at the end of July. This year, 41 artists have signed on for the event. The Art Crawl team have completed the curation process linking artists with local venues. The maternity cover has created an artist catalogue flipbook, which will be available online throughout the event. A LinkTree, with artist/venue details and links to each artists webpage will also be developed ahead of this year's event.

The Comms Officer (maternity cover) has also updated the front page of the Art Crawl website.

12. **Christmas Event** – The Christmas lights switch-on event will take place on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November. The Christmas tree has been selected and stage booked. Maternity Cover now in the process of securing stalls, food outlets, and entertainment. Work will also commence on the accompanying Christmas Guidebook in September.
13. **Christmas Charities Fair** – the fair will take place on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November (day after Christmas light switch-on) To date, 11 charities have agreed to partake in this year's event. A maximum of 21 stalls are available.
14. **Councillors on the Market** - Councillors held a Community Stall on the Market on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024, with Cllrs Gilbert and Dawson in attendance. The Maintenance Team and Mayor's PA provided operational support. After the market, the Cllrs spoke to Maternity Cover about making future market stalls more engaging for the public. On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024, Cllrs Gilbert, Emery & Dyer manned the TTC stall during the market's Community Day – the stall featured the public services backdrop and pull-up banner. A table was also set-up with bus timetables, walking trail flyers, a suggestion box, and maps of the town. Engagement at the markets has been well received by the public with a few people commenting on their interactions with Cllrs on social media.

## Additional Engagement

15. **2025 Calendar** – A social media campaign was launched at the start of August calling for residents to submit their photos of Thame for the 2025 calendar. The prize for those photos selected would be a free copy of the calendar. Submissions closed at the end of the month. The Information Centre received over 100 photos. Each month's photo has

now been selected and the calendar is at the printers.

16. **Town Guide** - Work on the 2025 guide is set to commence in September.
17. The **TTC Buses LinkTree** which was created at the end of June to give users instant access to every bus that services Thame, has been very popular <https://linktr.ee/thamebuses> At the end of August, the service had been accessed 3,620 times.
18. The bus links service was so well received, that on 1 July, a second **TTC Public Services LinkTree** was launched, incorporating all public services from TTC, SODC, and OCC in an alphabetical list: <https://linktr.ee/thamepublicservices> At the end of August, this had been accessed 1.22k times.
19. **Budget questionnaire** – in past years, calls for public engagement pre-budget have yielded little to no response. The Comms Officer (maternity cover) created a basic questionnaire for residents to fill out online which was shared in the newsletter and on the social media platforms. It contained 46 questions beginning with, “Would you like us to spend more or less money on...” As of 2 September, the questionnaire had been completed by 178 people.

Four open-for-comment questions at the end of the survey have also been completed by many of the respondents. As of 2 September:

- Where would you like to see your money spent in Thame? (65 responses)
- Over the coming years, what would you like TTC to focus on? (79 responses)
- What improvements would you like to see in residential areas/the High Street? (77 responses)
- Do you have any further suggestions or comments for TTC? (52 responses)

The questionnaire will remain available for public engagement until 20 September. Data will then be collated for the budget meeting and will be used to help form our strategy.

20. **Mayor’s Cycle to Montesson** – press releases were sent to local media outlets. To date, the ride has garnered media coverage with the following:
- BBC Oxford News (online)
  - Oxford Mail
  - Bucks Herald
  - The Herald Series
  - Thame Hub
  - Love Thame
  - Red Kite Radio
  - BBC Radio (interview to be conducted live on 11 Sept)
21. **Red Kite radio** - Belinda Lee, maternity cover presents a segment showcasing the latest news from TTC on John Reid-Hansen's programme every fortnight (Sunday mornings

between 10am and 12noon)

**Legal Powers:**

- Local Government Act 1972, Sections 142 and 144

**Recommendation:**

- i) To note the report.*