

Fleet Town Council Communications Strategy 2024

SITUATION

Fleet Town Council wants to:

- 🌱 Raise the profile of FTC and its role within the Fleet community
- 🌱 Connect with as wide an audience, and as greater number of residents as possible
- 🌱 Let residents and the wider public know the core values, vision, and priorities of the Council and its ambitions for the Fleet community. This will enable people to:
 - Know how their town council tax (precept) is being used
 - Know who to go to about specific issues
 - Understand the difference between Fleet Town, Hart District and Hampshire County Councils
- 🌱 Encourage two-way dialogue with the local community, actively seeking feedback and views
- 🌱 Maintain/build trust, so audiences know that the Council works hard and spends money carefully, with the residents front of mind, always

Target Audience

- 🌱 Primarily all residents in the FTC area, of all ages
- 🌱 Residents in the wider area who use FTC services and attend local events
- 🌱 Local businesses and organisations

STRATEGY

Strategic Approach

Fleet Town Council will make better use of its existing communications tools such as its website and newsletter, and free social media platforms, ensuring they are updated frequently and building trust through transparency and consistency.

The Council will build engagement through two-way communication where possible; asking and listening, not just 'telling.'

Fleet Town Council will:

- 🌱 Produce a wide range of regular communications on different media and platforms designed to reach a full demographic range
- 🌱 Place all residents at the heart of its external communications
- 🌱 Communicate and deliver on the Vision for Fleet, in order to encourage engagement and information sharing
- 🌱 Use its communications to sing about the positive things that it does and is involved with
- 🌱 Use its communications to build on relationships with local organisations to support our joint community objectives and its Vision
- 🌱 Ensure its communications uphold the same core values that Councillors are committed to:
 - Conducting business in an **apolitical** way
 - Making decisions **collectively**
 - **Communicating** openly and **listening**
 - Caring for the **environment**
 - Being **financially responsible**
 - Being **inclusive**
 - Acting with **integrity**

- Being **transparent**

Objectives (measurable)

- 🌱 Expand its communication reach and engagement by growing the number of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram followers
- 🌱 Increase the number of unique visits to FTC webpage and time spent on pages, establishing the FTC website as a valued resource for up-to-date information
- 🌱 Support engagement activities between FTC and the community to broaden appeal and gain a wider following
- 🌱 Grow awareness amongst residents, local businesses and organisation, of the role and responsibilities of FTC

Key Messages

Simple overarching themes and messages will help to tell a clear story and form a narrative about the Council's aims and priorities. These messages should be supported by evidence and outline the Council's activities, aims and objectives:

- 🌱 Who FTC is, what it does, (and what it does not do), including: open spaces, cemeteries, community buildings, the high street, The Harlington project, regeneration support for community groups and facilitation of events
- 🌱 FTC's Vision – highlighting activities from each aspect of the Council's Vision for Fleet
- 🌱 That Councillors are friendly, and approachable, professional and responsible, and work hard in residents' best interests
- 🌱 That the Council is a trusted source of impartial information
- 🌱 That the Council has established values that guide the work it does

Controlling the Narrative

The Council's communications strategy will set the tone and basis for information sharing on key projects by sharing factual information up front. This will enable it to control and frame the messages that go out, as well as contest mistruths with facts.

Tone of voice

- 🌱 Warm, **friendly** and approachable
- 🌱 **Positive** and upbeat
- 🌱 **Community-minded** and connected
- 🌱 Professional and **knowledgeable**
- 🌱 **Human** and conversational

The tone can be adjusted depending on the nature of the communication. For example, a Facebook post about Fleet Carnival would have a different tone to a press release about Remembrance Day.

Style

- 🌱 Always aim for clear, concise messaging in plain English where possible
- 🌱 Focus on the 'why' at the start of each piece, ensuring the reader is instantly connected to the purpose of whatever action is being described
- 🌱 Use Fleet Town Council in first instance (where it's not obvious), followed by 'we'
- 🌱 Messaging should be visual where possible, giving instant impact and giving the opportunity to reinforce the FTC brand
- 🌱 Develop a visual style and written house style to make FTC instantly recognisable

TACTICS

What FTC's communications might look like and do:

Media	Method	Example/measurements /notes
Social Media: Facebook/ Instagram/ Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A warm and friendly, informal space for FTC to build engagement • A carefully planned schedule of posts covering who FTC are and what we do, weaving in elements of the FTC Vision, our projects and assets over a month-long cycle, as well as upcoming events and notices. • Post fun, community 'just because' posts alongside council updates. Informal posts that relate to people's lives, build engagement and trust. Include topics in popular culture/ specific to the day or weather, season, and other 'humanising' subjects e.g. snow day. • Create engaging posts which add value to our audience in some way, informative, entertaining, or building community spirit. • Make use of graphics, images, videos, gifs and emojis to illustrate our points and make the information more entertaining and easily digestible. • Encourage people to interact and share posts where possible, to increase reach. Use hashtags to make posts to add to content and make them searchable, and tag organisations where appropriate, to increase reach. • 'Share' posts from other organisations that we have links to, or which support our Vision or benefit our audience in some way. • Use Facebook and Twitter's paid for advertising and promotional options for important notices – allowing FTC's channels to reach people in the Fleet area who may not already 'like' or 'follow' the Facebook and Twitter pages. • When posting about something led by HCC or HDC aim to differentiate between them and ourselves, by tagging them, saying 'our colleagues at' or similar. • Use social media to gather residents' views and use this information to direct our activities where appropriate • Negative comments: Handle all comments appropriately and politely. Remain friendly and warm to keep social media platforms a positive space. Aim to de-escalate through sharing facts and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at Facebook Insights tool to regularly check how different posts are performing in terms of reach and engagement. • Grow our networks by regularly sending invites to 'follow' FTC pages to those who have engaged with a post but are not current followers. • Use Canva to create graphics that allow a consistency to our publications – e.g. all using the blue and green of the FTC logo. • We will aim to post every day, striking a good balance between information and generic posts • Useful to have a list of organisations who are good to share and who we shouldn't share (e.g. political) • Look at examples of councils who do this well, e.g. Doncaster Council – https://twitter.com/MyDoncaster/status/1265710131003744256?s=20 Their creative tweets gain a lot of engagement, and people react well to their humour. This allows their messages to be spread a lot further, and is always done tastefully. Posts that are humorous or have popular culture references are more likely to be shared and engaged with, which will in turn raise awareness of the Council's work, and will allow the post to be seen by more people.
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the FTC website as an up to date 'what's happening' notice board • Make the FTC website the most up to date 'go to' place for information, linked to from other communications to find out more information • Update the FTC website to make it user-friendly, modern, and reflect the FTC Vision • Update the website to ensure accessibility for all users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website update project is an opportunity to make sure the FTC website is as customer focussed as possible, and reflects our style and vision.
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Residents' Meeting and specific project meetings as a primary form of engagement. • Pop-up Hub to appear at different events for Councillors to have a presence within the community, meet residents and have two-way discussions on key topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop-up Hub to continue at Fleet Market on a regular basis, and consider which other events/locations we can attend to have a presence and raise our profile: Fleet Carnival, Fleet Pond Society Day, Events at the Views/Calthorpe Park etc

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with local community groups, schools, charities and organisations • Consider campaigns and projects that could involve local people or organisations • Obtain feedback to evaluate how effective engagement is and to inform what needs to improve. • Continue to facilitate community events ensuring that involvement is communicated 	
Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to produce printed newsletter on a quarterly basis • Consider changing the name and branding design to make it clear it's from FTC and preferably to look consistent with the redesigned website • Redesign the layout to make it easy to see key messages at a glance, using interesting headlines, eye-catching images, and engaging content • Refocus the content to cover who FTC are, weaving in elements of FTC's Vision, our projects, assets and events, as well as what our community partners are doing and other community events • Aim to include valuable information about upcoming events so people retain it • Continue to upload on to website and start to send out to email list. • Pull out key content and share on social media where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how many read the newsletter and how effective it is and use findings to inform the design, structure and content. • Ideas from councillors on the name change and content most welcome
Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write regular press releases about key projects and events • Create a database of local and specific print publications, online publications • Press releases will also be uploaded on FTC website 	
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an email mailing list and send regular emails to subscribers including information about events, Council updates, meeting dates and the newsletter. • Enable people to sign up to receive FTC email updates from a page on the website • Ensure GDPR guidelines are adhered to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a framework for collecting and storing email data using model from The Harlington
Other offline communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community news magazines - Take up opportunities in to talk about specific projects or aspects of our vision. • Posters – continue to update noticeboards and signage to communicate with those not on social media • Noticeboards – Keep information up to date and make sure noticeboards are in good repair 	
Photography/ videography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an image bank of photography of Fleet Town Council buildings, open spaces, events and key areas of council work that can be used to illustrate digital and printed communications. • Create an image style which promotes consistency across imagery. Where this isn't possible, use filters and effects to unify the style of imagery. • Use video creatively to illustrate key areas of council work 	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our communication to ensure we remain on track and can quickly evolve to changes in communication approaches to remain effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online tools to track reach and responses in digital communications, use online and paper surveys and informal discussions to reach other audiences.