

# Stroud Town Council

## Communications and Engagement Strategy

Survey responses and workshop notes

**Date:** 9 December 2021      **Version:** Final



# Council-wide survey summary responses

Breakthrough Communications has provided a summary of the responses to the Council-wide survey conducted in late September and early October 2021. The survey responses informed the content of the Communications Strategy and the recommendations made.

The raw survey response data has also been made available to the Council. It contains some personal data.

This information was presented to the workshops held on 12 October 2021 and 26 October 2021. The summary responses formed the starting points for discussions about different aspects of the Council's communications.

The survey was sent to all officers and elected Members of the Town Council. In total there were 25 views, 23 starts and 21 completions of the survey.

## **How well do you feel you \*personally understand\* the Council's strategic goals and objectives? 1 being very poor and 10 very well.**

- Average response - 7
- Number of responses five or above – 20

## **Thinking about \*the purpose\* of the Council's communications, what do you believe its key communications objectives should be?**

- Clear communications - breaking down barriers and simplification of language
- Have two-way conversations with the community
- Communication of priorities - green / partnership work / community support
- Clear and targeted messages
- Highlight successes and positive news
- Set out the role of the Town Council - updates on its work and priorities

## **What are the ways in which you are aware that the Council currently communicates with the community?**

- Website 21 - 100%
- Press releases 20 - 95.2%
- Printed newsletters/leaflets 20 - 95.2%
- Facebook 19 - 90.5%
- Noticeboards 17 - 81%
- Articles/content in local publications 15 - 71.4%
- Twitter 11 - 52.4%
- E-newsletter 8 - 38.1%

- Other social media 4 - 19%
- Instagram 3 -14.3%
- Digital noticeboards 2 - 9.5%
- Other 1 - 4.8%
- Other: Office open to public and very visible windows, community development officer, through other organisations (community groups and commercial organisations), participation on wider district networks (CSP, Know Your Patch etc)

**Overall, how well do you think the Council currently communicates with the community? 1 being very poor and 10 very well.**

Average response - 6

Number of responses giving five or above – 18

**To what extent do you feel that the community has a good understanding of the Council’s \*functions\*? 1 being very poor and 10 very well.**

Average response - 4

Number of responses giving five or above – 7

**To what extent do you feel that the community has a good understanding of the Council’s \*work and services\*? 1 being very poor and 10 very well.**

Average response - 4

Number of responses giving five or above – 9

**To what extent you believe that the community feels\* engaged with the work of the Council\*? 1 being very poor and 10 very well.**

Average response - 5

Number of responses giving five or above - 13

**What \*top three things\* would you like the community to know and understand about the Council?**

- We are working hard to improve things (green spaces, town centre, etc)
- The Council is community focused
- The Council cares about the environment / It is green
- Understand the Town Council’s position in the local government hierarchy - this was mentioned a lot by both Officers and Members
- We listen to the community / Your voice matters
- How residents can have input
- Support for the community (Grants, projects, etc)

## **In your view, what are the biggest barriers preventing the Council from communicating effectively with the community?**

- Difficulty of getting messages across - modern life being busy / people not paying attention / apathy / getting cut-through
- Social media being complicated and people only engaging when something goes wrong
- Complicated language and the nature of being a council
- Limited understanding about the role of the council / Confusion about the Town Council vs the District Council
- Limited time, budgets and staffing resources

## **If you had to name just \*one thing\* that would help the Council to communicate with the community more effectively in the future, what would it be?**

- Specific staff resource dedicated to communications (Communications staff, community-based staff, bigger communications budget)
- More face-to-face contact (Community based staff, Mayor on a bench)
- More frequent communications or more communications channels (social media, monthly eBulletin, more frequent newsletters)
- Improved messaging and targeting
- Clarity around the Town Council's role vs the District Council's role

# Workshop notes

Breakthrough Communications has provided the notes taken during the two Communications Strategy workshops for information. The workshops took place on 12 October 2021 and 26 October 2021. Please note that this information is not a verbatim recording of everything that was said.

The information gathered during the workshop informed the content of the Communications Strategy and the recommendations made.

## **Shout Out: What do you think the council's biggest communications challenges are?**

- Need to ensure that it reaches the suburbs as well as the town centre
- Face to face
- Councillors engaging in surgeries
- Need to do more community events
- No consistent messaging – Council requires a basic set of messages
- Lack of evaluation
- Social media could be more engaging
- Need for clear branding – should have a logo on everything
- Should have a vibe of 'Clear you are in a different place'
- Need to move away from a 'local government' tone in communications
- Need to help people become engaged and to feel part of a community

## **Shout Out: What one thing would help the Council to communicate more effectively in the future?**

- Be more proactive and clearer
- A discussion about resources and staff time
- Clearly articulating the difference between STC and SDC with good stories
- 'We want everyone to be a well being'
- Principal message: Focused on our community, our environment and improving our town

## **Jamm Board: Before building a forward-looking strategy, we need to look at what has happened previously.**

### **What has worked well in the past?**

- Community Development Officer
- Green spaces team are good at engaging
- Website
- Noticeboard
- Facebook
- Printed newsletters and leaflet
- Bridge banner

- Press releases
- Shop notice boards
- Office window
- Articles and content in local publications
- Community noticeboards

**What has not worked so well in the past?**

- eNewsletter
- Clarity
- Mayors Facebook
- Telling stories
- Engagement with younger people
- Grants communications
- Town meeting
- Defining roles

**What do we know we can improve?**

- Social media – Facebook/Instagram/Twitter
- Defining council brand – council name
- Plain English
- Consistent messaging
- Setting measurable social media KPIs
- Using councillors to communicate / Councillors acting as ambassadors
- Getting people to tell our stories
- Annual communications plan which feeds into the budget
- Less official tone
- Consider areas outside of the town centre
- Face to face contact
- Co-producing with key audiences
- Engaging content
- Metrics
- Focus groups and citizen juries

## Jamm Board: SWOT Analysis

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Free to respond to community needs</li> <li>● Engaged councillors</li> <li>● Positive attitude and mindset</li> <li>● Provide many valued services</li> <li>● Uptake of technology</li> <li>● Proactive staff</li> <li>● Active and engaged community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unclear messages</li> <li>● Branding</li> <li>● Working with young people</li> <li>● Lack of understanding about roles and functions</li> <li>● STC vs SDC roles and functions</li> <li>● Tone of voice and use of plain English</li> <li>● Old office – lacking an accessible feel</li> <li>● Define audience</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Define audience</li> <li>● Destuffing of language and services – “welcoming”</li> <li>● Possibility to expand the team</li> <li>● Build on progress and positivity</li> <li>● Able to influence budget in the coming year</li> <li>● Councillors acting as community ambassadors</li> <li>● More face-to-face contact</li> <li>● Community hub at office?</li> <li>● Co-creation of stories</li> <li>● More use of social media “actions creating negative publicity”</li> <li>● Visitor and events offer made clear on website and social media</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Actions creating negative publicity</li> <li>● Time and resource constraints</li> <li>● Active and engaged community</li> <li>● Negative campaigning</li> </ul>

## Key audiences for Comms Strategy

Some discussion was had about the specific audience about Stroud’s traditional communities. However, the workshop came to the position the principal audiences to be addressed by the Communications Strategy should be:

- Living in Stroud
- Shopping in or visiting Stroud
- Working in Stroud
- Socialising in Stroud
- Studying in Stroud

## Messages

In terms of overall tone there is a desire to move to less stuffy, formal, and difficult language. Try to be more collaborative in approach. Aim for a two-way conversation.

It was felt that there needs to be a better explanation of the asset based approach of the Council which is aimed at enabling the community and not simply undertaking tasks for it.

## **What are the top THREE things you want your residents to know about your council?**

The Council is focused on:

- The Environment – both the global and local
- The Wellbeing agenda – improving opportunities and outcomes for all
- Community engagement – working with the whole community to improve Stroud

## **Jamm Board: Comms methods and messages**

### **Audience**

- Stroud's traditional communities

### **Platform**

- Noticeboards and lampposts
- The Subs venue
- Doctors and libraries
- Pubs and community centre
- Organisations – Friends of the Hospital, Rotary, Masons, etc
- Facebook – possibly use to Ad and target
- Print media – newspapers and newsletters

### **Messages**

- Community Messaging
- Focus on events
- Demonstrate how they can get involved and have a say – grants for instance
- What do you want?