




## Update on communications actions – May 2024.



**Key:**



 Action completed.

 Ongoing work

Actions	Status	Update
<b>Comms strategy</b>		
<p>That the Committee feels that the proposals of the panel should be considered as part of the development of the Council's new Communications Strategy.</p>		<p>Work has been completed to refresh the council's approach to strategic communications which focuses on how we will deliver timely and professional communications that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect and embed our place-based approach and our corporate priorities as set out in the corporate plan.</li> <li>• Keep residents informed of our services, plans and achievements.</li> <li>• Build trust and confidence helping to manage the council's reputation.</li> <li>• Inform and engage councillors, stakeholders and officers, promoting opportunities to get involved in the things we do and enhancing their experience of working with us</li> <li>• Support recruitment of new staff</li> </ul> <p>A Communications toolkit has also been produced and is due to be launched later this month which provides practical guidance and support into how we 'do' comms: from ensuring we promote the work we do to a high standard, using a style and tone of voice that is appropriate, engaging and accessible, as well as providing practical how-to resources. This includes responding to issues identified in the communications review such as using simple terminology.</p>

Actions	Status	Update
<b>Website:</b>		
<p>The panel proposes that work to develop a new Council website and access point for digital services with enhanced search functionality, greater accessibility, and the ability to stream videos more easily be taken forward at the earliest opportunity.</p>		<p>The Strategy and Innovation Service commissioned an independent review of the website in 2023. The review recommended that before considering any business case for implementing a new platform, that the fundamental basics of managing content needed to be resolved as this was impacting the overall user experience more so than the platform.</p> <p>A first pass of all website content has been completed reducing the current size of the site from 3150 pages to 1400 pages. Achieved by removing out of date information and un-used pages. A second stage is now underway in which the remaining 1400 pages are undergoing a detailed content review and will be re-written if required. New guidelines for all future content have been produced and all new content is subject to adhering to these alongside set review dates for all pages as part of business as usual.</p> <p>Work to improve the search functionality has been undertaken. An automated process has been removed that was prioritising search results based on how we had structured sections of the site which didn't make the most sense and resulted in poor search results. Whilst we are restructuring the site and reviewing content, we have implemented a more manual process to update search terms which gives more control over the search results and allows us to build a better foundation for the search going forward. We have started the process of reviewing every webpage, restructuring content and optimising them for the search. Once all the pages have been reviewed, the automated process will be re-instated.</p> <p>Whilst we try to capture all the variations of what our service users could be searching for, if you have searched for something and it did not return the results you were expecting, please do let us know by emailing <a href="mailto:website@testvalley.gov.uk">website@testvalley.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Video streaming and the rendering of videos is now working well on the website.</p>

Actions	Status	Update
<p>The panel proposes that the opportunity to undertake user-led testing of the new Council website and online services should be incorporated into the project. This will ensure it is developed in a way that reflects how people will use the facilities with an important focus on the use of accessible language and navigation.</p>		<p>User-led testing – The web team are currently designing a new site map and navigation based around service user journeys and the information people are accessing. Following the completion of the first pass of content it is anticipated that the new site map will be completed at the end of July, and this will be subject to user testing later this year.</p>
<b>Digital Communications</b>		
<p>The panel proposes that further work is undertaken to build upon the reach and work of the Council’s digital newsletter(s) to communicate and engage residents on a variety of hot topics.</p>		<p>The Council has continued to invest in the development of its email newsletter(s) which people are able to subscribe to a range of topics. Overall total number of sign ups is 24,083 with continued growth. A summary of subscriber numbers is below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News and Updates – 10,932</li> <li>Your Events – 7,463</li> <li>Business Matters – 2,403</li> <li>Green Test Valley – 2,001</li> <li>Regen – 644</li> <li>Landlords – 640</li> </ul>

Actions	Status	Update
<p>The panel proposes that if a new telephone system is adopted, that a member/officer workshop should be arranged so that a full understanding of its functionality is gained.</p>		<p>The feedback from members regarding telephones has been acted upon with an internal campaign led by Management Team across services to ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities and to ensure appropriate training on using the current system has been provided. Early indications are that this has had a positive effect on routing and answering of calls and this work will continue over the months to come.</p> <p>Work will commence later this year to scope out our future telephony requirements to inform the business case for the procurement of a new system.</p>
<b>Letters</b>		
<p>The panel proposes that amendments to the Council tax reminder letter, housing benefit letter and private hire licensing letter are considered in line with the feedback given by members and shared with the committee at its meeting in April.</p>		<p>In addition to the Private hire licensing letters which had already been updated, the Finance and Revenues Service have confirmed that the amended reminder letters have been implemented reflecting the changes requested by members including signposting to support organisations such as Citizens Advice.</p>