

KPC Communications Group Report

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Status: **Draft**
Approved
Withdrawn

Type: Public
Restricted
Confidential

Version: 1.0

Reviewed by: P&F on January 18th, 2024

Approved by:

Review Due:

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Executive Summary

This report of the Communications Group is in response to the terms of reference agreed on 29th June 2023 at Full Council and was established to review the existing channels used by Kidlington Parish Council (KPC) for internal and external communications. Our key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in the numbered section below with the full listing being found in Sections 8 & 9.

In order to fully understand the complexities and interconnectedness of this area, a full research review and exploration of relevant and up to date literature and analysis has been carried out by the Group. This is detailed in the Literature Review (3) which has informed and shaped the Methodology (4) for data and information collection. Conclusions and recommendations have subsequently been brought forward for consideration in Sections 8 & 9. These recommendations are linked to best practice across the sector and are split between those which should be carried out directly as a response to this report and those which have been investigated and brought forward for adoption during the next phase.

During our research we have been reminded of the clear benefits of planned and focused communication, and that will be further discussed throughout this document. In order for any communication plan to be effective, meaningful and far reaching there needs to be a synergy with the values and priorities (aims and objectives) of The Council.

1. Values, aims and objectives.

KPC should evaluate what its key values are and how these can help guide its aims and objectives for the coming years. We recommend KPC conducts an exercise to identify its values and how these can be applied in a strategic way through aims and objectives.

Establishing an agreed set of values is a communication priority, it is core to maintaining compliance with the Nolan Principles of accountability, openness, and honesty. Without a stated set of values, it would be difficult for members of the public to determine the Council's direction of travel. A values document would also put all Council members and staff on the same page, enabling more efficient and effective progress towards the Council's shared goals.

2. Policy and Strategy.

Once our values, aims and objectives have been identified the Communications Group recommends adoption of the Communications Strategy and Policy.

3. Communication Plan.

We recommend that the Council agrees an aims-based Communication Plan which is in line with the agreed values (to be brought forward by the Communication Group) to help communicate its objectives to the public and other stakeholders. Communication with external parties is vital because "effective communication is critical for councils to build trust with the community and promote engagement" (Purchase, 2023).

Creation of a Communications Plan based on our values and priorities enables us to share what we do, how we do it and why we do it with all areas of our diverse community with a much greater frequency. This plan should be 'aims' based and provide details on appropriate channels, timings, follow up and expected interactions. This should be regularly reviewed to ensure reach, alignment, and best practice.

The Communication Plan should include an aims-based engagement action plan as part of an outreach channel.

4. Narrative vs broadcast

Our research has identified that to build trust and engagement the council will need to communicate consistently and sufficiently frequently and must be receptive to feedback on how it can improve.

It is now over ten years since the mainstream social media channels emerged, these are now seen as part of the traditional media landscape with new mechanisms and platforms emerging on a regular basis. As a consequence, our expectations of media have also changed, broadcasting information to a wide audience in single or narrow channel is no longer acceptable and has little impact. In order to reach an audience content needs to be varied, considered, provide a narrative (story) and be suitable for consumption by the intended recipients. A range of mediums and platforms should be used dependant on and appropriate to the community we are trying to reach, these could include vlogs, blogs, or editorials, this could for instance have included a time lapse or YouTube of the construction and planting of the Coronation Garden.

The demographic and socio-economic breakdown of our community needs to be fully understood to enable us to reach residents effectively. Further information can be found in the Literature Review.

5. Reach.

We found that a key aspect of the Nolan Principle of accountability includes reaching as diverse an audience as possible, and it is noted that according to our research it is unrealistic to expect residents to go and find information from the website “Expecting that people will go to the council website and read council minutes is unrealistic, councils need to promote an interest in democracy” (Shirley, 2023, p. 2). We therefore recommend that the Communication Group illustrates through the Communication Plan how it can broaden public reach through its communications. Demographics that we believe should be assessed during this include age, gender, ethnicity and other socio-economic indicators. For example, we should consider how young people can best be reached, to ensure that even those without voting rights can still have their voices heard. We also recommend that KPC explore how it can reach audiences across a range of platforms, including the newsletter, social media, website articles, video, etc. The previously discussed Communication Plan should capture how these various platforms will be utilised to best portray the Council’s values.

To accompany this, we propose the inclusion of an outreach programme within the Communication Plan to ensure that it is aims driven. This could include councillor surgeries, actively gathering feedback on proposed projects such as the skatepark or sharing information about events. This would illustrate to the public that KPC are happy to be engaging across the community.

6. The Website.

One of KPC’s main current communication methods is its website, www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk. This holds key information such as agendas and minutes for meetings, Council contact details and statutory documents. It is therefore vital that the website include all necessary and statutory information for compliance with regulations, that it meets current accessibility standards, and is usable by people across a range of device types. We recommend a thorough review of the website’s accessibility by a third party (CloudyIT or SLCC), to determine all areas of non-compliance with the current WCAG 2.0 standards. The website should also be upgraded to support the secure HTTPS protocol, so that users can have confidence that the site’s pages and documents they download from it are trustworthy. We also recommend that a detailed usability assessment be carried out, to assess what aspects of the website may hinder use on modern devices and operating systems. We believe the Council should not hesitate to completely rebuild the website if these assessments show that the website is not currently fit for purpose.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kidlington is a large parish of approximately 5800 households and a suggested population of 14000 (OCSI, 2021a) (OCSI, 2021b) and is the Local Service Centre for this village grouping (CDC, 2023).

Kidlington Parish Council (KPC) has 15 Councillors and 13 staff (as of December 20th, 2023). The office team, led by the Parish Clerk, is customer-facing and based at Exeter Hall.

KPC's inability to respond and defend itself against inaccurate, badly written or harmful content became more apparent during the Parish Poll of 2023 and the extensive and often destructive debate around the possible Stadium development.

At the Full Council meeting on 29th June 2023, the Communications Group was created to explore, establish, and evaluate the current communication uses throughout KPC and the wider community with regard to communication and community engagement and to bring forward to Council a suitable Strategy and Policy (full Scope/Terms of Reference is provided in Section 2).

The initial members were Councillors Lesley McLean, Melanie Moorhouse and William Easdown Babb, with participation from the Clerk. Councillor Phil Wyse joined the group in November 2023 and has provided input regarding Community Outreach, which also falls within the group's remit.

While Kidlington Parish Council (KPC) currently has no formal communication strategy or policy, communications are guided by the Chair (Cllr David Robey) and Clerk (Rachel Faulkner).

KPC has a wide range of stakeholders whose views may be collated, analysed, and presented as part of this report. These include:

- parishioners
- KPC Councillors, the Clerk, other KPC staff, and volunteers
- third party groups (e.g. local businesses, community groups, advocacy groups)
- the wider public (including those living in Kidlington village but outside the Parish)
- local authorities (Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council)
- our closely neighbouring parishes

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to establish and review the existing communication channels used by KPC and provide recommendations and guidance for improvement. This report will describe evidence-based best practices, communications methods, and KPC's current methodology. The evidence provided will be used as a basis for recommendations to the Council on the development of its communication and engagement moving forward, and it will form the basis of a Strategy, a Policy, and the additional works envisaged in further phases. These would then be voted on by the Council and implemented if approved.

2 Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were set by the meeting of Full Council on June 29th, 2023 (Kidlington Parish Council, 2023). Minute 23/058: It was RESOLVED to form a Communications Working Group comprising Cllrs Lesley McLean, Melanie Moorhouse and William Easdown Babb. Terms of reference will be to review and make recommendations on the Council's policy on communication with residents and others.

The Communications Group interpreted this to mean, define and assess the status of:

- i. Internal communications
- ii. External communications - one-way
- iii. External communications - two-way

and propose:

- iv. Identification of options
- v. Evaluation of options
- vi. Recommend options and bring them forward to P&F for approval
- vii. Implementation phase (and training if necessary)
- viii. Continual Improvement (loop) phase

The Communication Group will report directly to the Policy and Finance (P&F) Committee - any proposals will be discussed and agreed there. This report will concern itself with the status of existing communications, propose a strategy and a policy, recommend a communications plan for adoption at Committee, and make suggestions for possible further phase implementations. Implementation of the strategy and communications plan is viewed as an ongoing process with the required feedback loop to ensure learning for both members and staff, and monitoring.

3 Literature Review

In order to fully consider communication, we need to establish an understanding of what it means. Thompson (2018) argues that it is “a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (Thompson, 2018, p. 12) (cited in Rogers 1995). Fielding (2006) and Babatunde (2015) both suggest that good communication is essential for all organisations (Fielding, 2006) (Babatunde, 2015). Purchase (2023) suggests that as the closest level of government to the community it is essential for parish councils to communicate effectively and strategically.

The Localism Act 2011 increased the expectations on Parish Councils to listen to their communities and be a facilitator of community action. In addition, the summary report on the findings of the Commission on the Future of Localism explores the definition and meaning of localism as the people’s perception of their own power and ability to make change, and: “the connections and feelings of belonging that unite people within their communities.” (Commission on the Future of Localism, 2018, p. 7) and goes further suggesting that engagement can harness the power of the people through relationship, engagement and co-creation “power starts with people: power doesn’t belong to decision-makers to ‘give away’.” (Commission on the Future of Localism, 2018, p. 13).

Joanie Willett (Associate Professor in Politics at Exeter University) carried out research focusing on Parish Councils and Community Engagement in 2018. Evidence showed an increasing discontent with local democracy (Geurtz and Van De Wijdeven 2010 cited in (Willett & Cruxon, 2018, p. 3)) and she identified that many of the issues raised by the public about parish councils (such as mistrust) have miscommunication at the root of the problem. Good two-way communication can reduce dissatisfaction and increase participation, and her paper highlights that councillors with close relationships to their localities can be more responsive to local cultural, built and natural environments. She argues that this is most effective in Parish Councils where there is a greater involvement from residents, suggesting that really listening to people can legitimise decision-making through a sense of personal investment. (Willett & Cruxon, 2018). This is further substantiated by the Commission on the Future of Localism which proposes that local leaders should harness people power through engagement, ongoing relationships and co-creation. (Commission on the Future of Localism, 2018).

More recently local engagement and good communication has been explored in Purchase (2023). He points out that good communication should not just focus on the why, but the what and how of good communication for effective community engagement, implying that councils can easily overlook communication which can often focus on a ‘broadcast’ format. Listening is crucial, feedback verbally in person, through surveys or social media, which engage different parts of the community, help councils to understand the community’s needs and concerns (Purchase, 2023). He states the importance of communicating the ‘here and now’ of meetings, events, etc, alongside strategic priorities and values, consideration of key audiences and messages, and listening through communication channels. In order to achieve good communication Purchase (2023) advocates using social media to build sustainable two-way

conversations with the community as well as engaging young people, building a narrative or story through content, and using image, video and sound in digital communications.

The need for strategic communications is restated by Jones & Holdstock (2023):

“Local councils that do not adequately recognise the importance of strategic communications in terms of resources, skills and its place in the structure, are likely to be the ones that struggle the most to connect with their residents, staff and stakeholders” (Jones & Holdstock, 2023).

The connection to young people is further explored and corroborated by Shirley (2023) (a parish clerk) whose dissertation focused on youth councils as a method of engaging young people in democracy, her research found that councils need to promote an interest in democracy (Shirley, 2023).

“Expecting that people will go to the council website and read council minutes is unrealistic, councils need to promote an interest in democracy” (Shirley, 2023, p. 2)

The Future of Local Councils goes further and recommends councils should review their communication and engagement strategies in relation to their differing communities' needs, and requirements and assess tools (media/social media) to communicate and engage effectively (SLCC, 2023).

The Local Government Association (LGA) echoes Purchase's advice. They suggest building a deliberate narrative around the strategic priorities and values of the council within its communications (LGA, n.d.) . This is reiterated by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) who provide guidance to local councillors through the Good Councillors Guide (NALC, 2018), and also operate the Local Council Award Scheme Guide (NALC, 2021) which provides tools and encouragement to councils that are striving to improve, with the goal of driving up standards. The Award Scheme Guide includes detailed frameworks and examples for councils at all three award levels highlighting best practice across council work including communication and community engagement. The LGA have also issued the Local Leadership Framework for Councillors which includes best practice documents for community engagement and communication (LGA, 2023). NALC clearly reminds Councillors of their responsibility to be directly informed about local views (NALC, 2018) suggesting that Councillors should be actively engaged in their communities and openly consult on local matters (NALC, 2018).

Similarly, the LGA's Guidance for new councillors states that building strong relationships, good communication, local engagement, and ensuring local people make their views known is vital to understanding and representing local views and priorities and central to being an effective councillor. (LGA, 2019, p. 7). Updated guidance advocates a detailed councillor profile that goes beyond facts to giving a narrative of the councillor and what they stand for This reiterates the importance of keeping up to date with local concerns and ensuring all voices are heard through regular and effective communication with all parts of the community using a range of different methods (LGA, 2023). A profile template can be found in the Appendix F - Local Leadership Framework Councillor Profile.

Across the literature and guidance there is a clear sense that understanding our audience and putting energy into reaching all groups not only increases the trust in and respect for a council but can also ensure that the 'echo chamber' effect is avoided. This evidence supports the premise that building a communication strategy around our differing communities, which illustrates the council's values, will allow us to communicate and engage effectively, which can lead to increased local empowerment and legitimacy of decision-making.

There is a recurring theme across the relevant literature that engagement and communication work best when linked to the strategy and values of the council and when these are reflective of and respond to community views with a built-in function for review and a continuous improvement process (NALC, 2021).

It is also clear that the most effective communication strategies combine multiple channels and ensure that the Parish Council Website, printed communications and social media channels are aligned with each other

rather than there being reliance on one over another (LGA, 2018) as well as being both accessible and user friendly. In the Guide to the Local Council award scheme, a piece of evidence sought at the Quality Award level includes:

“The annual report and news bulletins must be online even if they were also distributed in hard copy such as in printed newsletters or village magazines. If the council uses social media such as Facebook or Twitter, this will be evident from the council’s website.” (NALC, 2021, p. 12).

The preceding evidence has considered communications from a holistic approach, as KPC currently uses a website for communication purposes, guidance has been sought in order to make an evaluation on the effectiveness of our website. The LGA guide to creating accessible content highlights the importance of both Web Accessibility and Inclusive Design as well as key features to consider when creating content, including helping to ensure inclusivity and accessibility, such as the use of images to provide context and help readers decode more complex meaning alongside the use of plain English (LGA, 2022). In their recently updated guidance, the Government Digital Service (GDS) highlights the different ways people read digital content and the need for digital copy to be written using a different approach, including aiming at a reading age of 9, avoiding blocks of text, complex words and jargon, and keeping in mind that most readers will skim a page, not read it in full (Government Digital Service, 2023). The NALC also has clear guidance on accessibility for Parish council publications, including websites (NALC, 2021). Guidance from NALC in 2010 noted that an effective website needs to meet the needs of the user, or they won’t return and their three key areas to judge effectiveness were the content, the navigation and the calls to action (NALC, 2010, p. 43). A more recent article published by Falmouth University could be seen as building on this with their 6 key considerations in User Experience Design being 1: Focus on the User, 2: Put usability first, 3: Create Consistency, 4: Use Visual Hierarchy, 5: Give the user control, 6: Design for Accessibility. (Hazzard, 2022). The SLCC’s Community Engagement App (Appendix G - SLCC Community Engagement App) is one example of these principles being considered and applied to local government communications.

Conclusions and guidance have been taken from the above literature review and will be used to establish recommendations and conclusions based around the evidence provided by our research.

4 Methodology

Carrying out a critical literature review has provided the foundation and guidance for our research strategy and analysis. It has provided a thorough insight into and understanding of previous research, and trends in our understanding have emerged.

As this report is based on human communication and the social sciences are wary of deduction testing theory, we will be more reliant on inductive research. Deductive testing can lead to a cause-effect link between variables without an understanding of, or giving full meaning to, the human-interpreted social world, whereas a less structured approach could reveal alternative explanations. An inductive approach is concerned with context and allows us to explore data and develop theories from them with a fuller picture and understanding of the nature of the problem through various research methods. In addition, there are no predetermined theories or conceptual frameworks. In order to take this approach, a full knowledge and understanding of the subject area is required and the Communications Group has been at pains to ensure this is the case. Inductive theory is also a better fit for a smaller sample number and limited data, and is flexible and adaptable to change, allowing for the research to change direction as a result of new data. (Saunders, 2007)

The research for this report has been carried out using a combination of research approaches, focusing predominantly on induction theory. We have undertaken mixed methods research using both quantitative and qualitative techniques both in combination and in parallel, ensuring that data is analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Qualitative data will be predominant.

Exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research study approaches will be used in the manner of surveys, case studies, interviews, and questionnaires. Descriptive research has been carried out by collecting qualitative data in order to portray an accurate profile of situations, this has assisted with explaining reasoning and provided additional understanding of behaviour. Ethnography has been used to gain insights into a particular context and better understand and interpret it from the perspectives of those involved and has enabled us to research communications within the context in which they occur. Using a range of differing methods dependent on purposes in this study also enables triangulation of data collected via other methods (Saunders, 2007).

Interviews, as informal and semi-structured conversations with the researcher having a list of themes and questions to be covered which may vary from interview to interview, allow for context and exploration, recorded through note taking. Questionnaires are not particularly good for exploratory research that could require large numbers of open-ended questions, they work best with standardised questions that can be interpreted in the same way by all respondents. As such self-administered questionnaires have been used for standardised questions, with interviews and open-ended questions being used to provide context and reflection on human interactions.

The questions posed were influenced by a variety of factors related to the research and primarily related to the types of questions required to collect data. Qualitative data responses to open-ended questions and interviews have been analysed and the meanings understood. Qualitative data analysis procedures assist this, allowing the development of theory from data and include both deductive and inductive approaches, and like the process you use to construct a jigsaw, range from simple categorisation of responses to processes for identifying relationships between categories (Saunders, 2007).

The results of our analysis will provide a formulation of theories and ultimately recommendations.

4.1 Evidence – Peer Councils

Results of a questionnaire sent to peer councils in our local area (Appendix A – Peer Council questionnaire results) revealed that:

- 3 out of the 4 councils have a relevant policy, even if with a different name. Only 1 has a dedicated communications strategy.
- 3 out of the 4 councils have regular outreach, either through regular consultation or in-person surgeries.
- social media usage is mostly focused on Facebook.
- 3 out of the 4 councils are posting on Facebook multiple times a week or more.
- for the 2 councils that do not have a newsletter, posting on social media is at a much higher frequency.

Based on the LGA's assertion that where a council needs to be strongest on communication is Facebook (LGA, 2018), we identified councils with a similar population in the 2021 census and similar population density to Kidlington and surveyed their Facebook activity and post content (Appendix B – Results of survey on Facebook activity for similar Councils). Some clear trends emerged in the types of posts:

- Almost all posts had a picture or video with them.
- The vast majority of pages only allowed the Council to put up posts. Only one had posts that were regularly from members of the community.
- The more regular the posting, the more engagement there was in the comments.

The most common types of posts were:

- Council-led events, both frequent advertising prior to the event and write-ups after the event had taken place.
- Public service announcements including transport news and messages from their district and/or county council. Topics included planned road closures, Food Bank information, Police notices and notices from the NHS.

- Promotion of local events and many had calls for local organisations to get in touch if they would like their event promoted.
- Notification of parish meetings, including committee meetings. Some also had posts with the key highlights from what was discussed at meetings.
- Requests for feedback or involvement in consultations. Either run on the site or signposting to another platform or event.
- Notification for councillor surgeries, for either local and/or district councillors.
- Lost and found posts.
- Adverts for councillor and council staff roles.

Less common post types, but that we felt were interesting to consider the use of included:

- Calls for Grant Applications.
- Sharing opportunities to apply for funding outside of the council.
- Competitions.
- School announcements, particularly open evenings and opening of application cycles.
- Promotion of local business and 'shopping local'.
- Posts highlighting council purchases and/or donations.
- Election reminders.
- Planning Application notifications or calls for consultation.
- Calls for consultation on council documents, such as draft budgets.
- Thank You's

We also found that some councils posted links to their YouTube channel and to a blog hosted on their website. A number have been working towards a neighbourhood plan over the last 12 months and this was very evident in their Facebook posts.

4.2 Evidence – Survey Analysis

Our first survey (Appendix C – Gala Day Survey Results) was conducted during Gala Day using both paper forms and a QR code. Unfortunately, the inclement weather reduced both the number of the public in attendance and the ease of completing the survey. We received 47 responses, of which 31 indicated they lived in Kidlington. Whilst this sample size is too small to draw valid conclusions from, noticeable trends it highlighted for us to explore further were:

- Most people had found out about the event through Word of Mouth (42.5%) or a poster or banner (36%).
- 77% indicated that word of mouth is how they normally find out about what is happening in Kidlington, with Facebook being the second most popular response at 40%.
- Only 2 respondents, 4% indicated that they used the Parish Website to find out what was happening in Kidlington.
- Only 19% of respondents remembered receiving a parish newsletter, but 51% would be interested in receiving the newsletter digitally.

Over November and December, we held an online poll that was shared over social networks including Facebook and WhatsApp groups as well as through our personal networks. We also sent this to schools with a request to share, although only one school confirmed that they would do this.

We received 247 responses, of which 221 stated they were Kidlington Residents, which is 89.5%. Of the remaining responses, 10 were from Yarnton, 1 from Begbroke, 1 from Gosford, 2 from Islip and 1 from Oddington, 11 declared themselves as being OX5 but did not give a village. The survey results are in Appendix D - Online Poll Results.

We asked questions in three key areas, which are covered by the following subsections.

Understanding of what the Parish Council is responsible for

We asked residents to respond on a scale of 1 – “Not understanding at all” to 10 – “A very good understanding”.

50.3% of respondents based in Kidlington gave a score of 5 or above, which seems positive, however when considered in the context of this poll being predominantly distributed via KPC social media and the Communication Group’s own networks, we might have hoped this figure would be higher. There was also a trend for older age groups to feel they better understood the parish council, than younger age groups.

How residents find out about what is happening in Kidlington.

Facebook and Word of mouth were the most common methods of gaining awareness, with 61% of residents listing Facebook and 60% word of mouth. Currently, the most information about the Parish Council is published on our website and our official form of communication is our newsletter.

- Website
15.6% of respondents currently use to find out what is happening in Kidlington.
33.5% of respondents would like our website to be a source of information they can use.
- Newsletter
22.1% of respondents currently feel the newsletter is one way they find out what is happening in Kidlington.
46.1% of respondents would like to find out what is happening in Kidlington from a KPC newsletter.

Whilst 60% currently find out about what is happening in Kidlington through word of mouth, when asked how they would like to find out, word of mouth was only chosen by 13.5% of respondents. The survey suggests that there is a clear wish for there to be a greater level of communication about what is happening in Kidlington via official KPC channels and community led social media. The top four options selected were:

- Facebook 65.3%
- KPC Newsletter 46.1%
- KPC Website 33.5%
- WhatsApp 32.2%

Whilst the majority of respondents indicated multiple channels they are happy to use, 40 indicated a single course. Of these, 15 selected Facebook, 10 selected the KPC Newsletter, and 6 selected WhatsApp.

Whilst most channels spread across all age groups, Kidlington News and Kidlington Voice was only mentioned by those in the 55+ age groups.

Based on usage statistics by demographics of social media platforms across the UK, we had expected our younger respondents to have a preference for Instagram, however, this did not come through in our data. This could be because we had a very low number of respondents in the under 18 and 18-24 categories. This highlights a gap in our social media reach and ways to breach this gap is something that needs to be considered going forward.

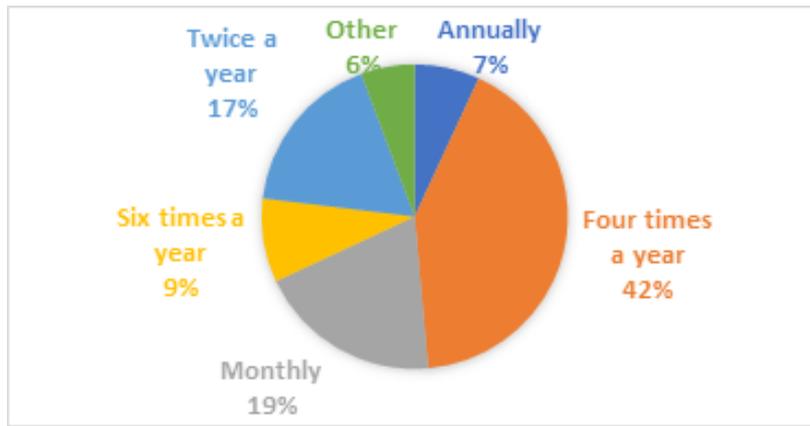


Figure 1. Responses to "The Kidlington Parish Council Newsletter is currently published annually. How frequently would you like it to be published?"

In terms of the frequency of the newsletter, the preference was for four times a year. However, in the 'other' answers, several people noted that if it was digital, they would prefer it monthly.

In a separate question, 81% said they would be interested in receiving the newsletter in a digital format.

Note from Clerk:

KPC's annual newsletter is posted on our website and therefore available in a digital format.

What residents would like to see as the Parish Council prioritise

It is interesting that High Street Regeneration had the highest response and reducing carbon footprint the lowest.

Note from Clerk:

Whilst this is really interesting I am not sure what it has to do with Communications. Very useful for thinking about the council's aims and values though.

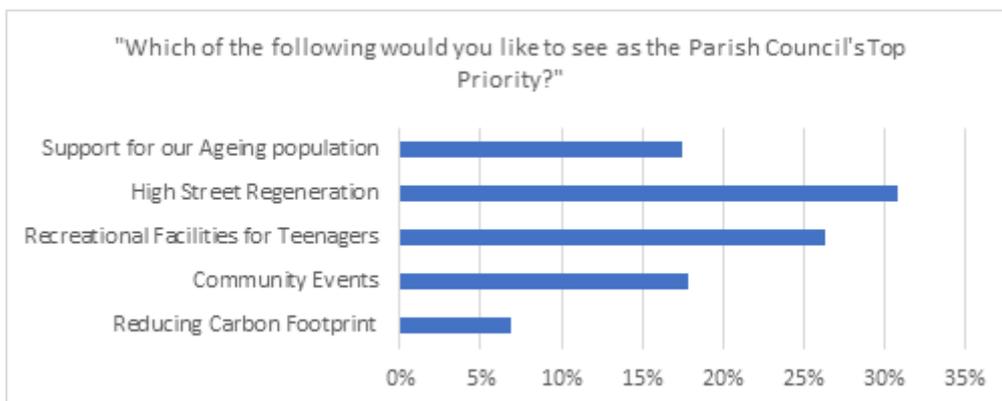


Figure 2. Responses to "Which of the following would you like to see as the Parish Council's Top Priority?"

Analysing this by age group it was interesting to see some key trends:

- Community events are more important to younger respondents than older respondents.
- Recreational facilities were most important for under 18's and those most likely to be parents to teenagers.
- Regeneration of the high street was consistently important to all age brackets from 25 upwards.

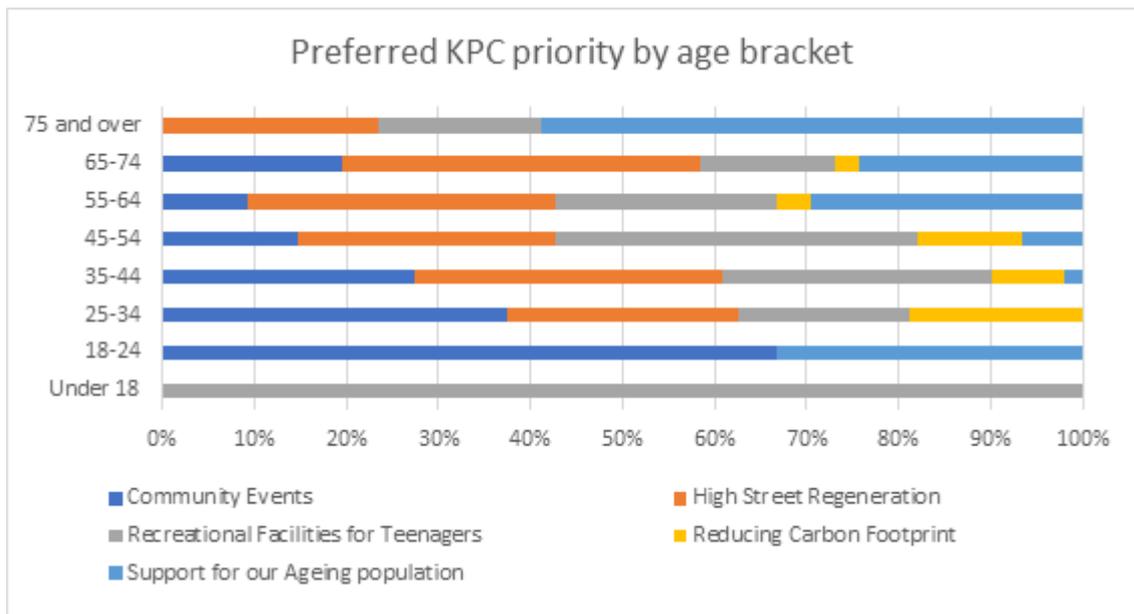


Figure 3. Preferred KPC priority by age bracket

4.3 Evidence – Interviews

The value of using non-standardised interviews is derived from the flexibility that they offer to explore the complexity of a given topic. Carrying out research interviews in this manner can lead to additional areas being highlighted which had not previously been considered which can lead to a significant growth in understanding. Using conversation allows for ‘thinking out loud’ and permits the collection of rich data which is particularly useful when the questions being explored are complex or open-ended.

One to one anonymous semi-structured interviews were undertaken with residents at the Fireworks and Christmas Lights evening events. As the area of communications is complex and dynamic, we used semi-structured face to face interviews for exploratory and explanatory research. We wanted the interviewee to explain and build on their responses, we were looking to understand the meaning, through probing responses which added significance and depth to our data.

These semi-structured interviews were focused on:

- Knowledge of the Parish Council.
- How information is received.
- Perception of communication.

We were able to vary the order of logic questions to allow for conversation, and further understanding, with the aim of obtaining data to enable us to answer research questions. The answers provided reflect the reality at the time they were collected. A range of open and closed questions were used to clarify thinking.

The results were provided as qualitative data and have been analysed with the following results:

Knowledge of the Parish Council:

Many of those interviewed were not aware of the Parish Council or its responsibilities, most were unaware of the local ward areas.

How information is received:

Interviewees were clear that ‘word of mouth’ or Facebook were the most likely form of information, none remembered receiving a newsletter.

Perception of communication:

Many of those interviewed did not remember receiving any type of communication from the Parish Council, however on further questioning it was clear that some had noticed the bus stop advertising in a subconscious way. Most perceived communication as direct information, others were looking for more meaningful stories that would become more memorable.

5 What is 'effective' communication?

The term 'communication' can encompass a huge range of activities. For the purposes of this report, we are focusing on:

- **Internal communication** within the Parish Council focusing on communication between councillors and between the Office and councillors.
- **External communication** between the Parish Council and our residents as well as between the Parish Council and community stakeholders. This includes both one-way and two-way communication.

What is clear is that whilst often used interchangeably, information giving is not the same thing as communication. Effective communication is something that works well and produces the results that were intended. Therefore, the key question is what properties do we want our communications to have to be considered effective? These are covered in the following subsections.

Accessible

- Written communication should be clear and concise avoiding jargon or technical terms and acronyms to ensure that it is easy for everyone to understand.
- A variety of communication channels should be used to reach as many residents as possible in a way that they are comfortable with.
- Residents should have clear methods of communicating to the councillors and officers ensuring they feel empowered to have their voice heard.
- Images and videos should have Alt Text and Captions where possible.
- Communications should meet the accessibility guidelines to ensure that our disabled residents are not excluded (NALC, 2021).

Accurate and Timely

- All communication should be accurate, keeping in mind the Nolan Principles of Accountability, Openness and Honesty (UK Government, 1995). Where relevant, evidence-based information should reference sources.
- One-way communication should be scheduled as per the communications plan both preceding and following the subject of the communication.
- Two-way communication should be responded to as per the communications plan and that time frame should be public knowledge.

Effective

- The audience of the communication needs to have understood the full meaning intended by the communicator.
- Images and video are likely to increase effectiveness and understanding as they provide additional context for the viewer to use to decode the message and support the understanding of more complex messages (LGA, 2022).

Engaging

- The level of communication has increased exponentially in the twenty-first century and therefore the chance of a communication not being received and fully processed by intended recipients has increased. Good communication will reach the recipient and engage them in processing the contents of it.
- Narrative and Storytelling are two key features of effective communication because stories are how humans make sense of the world (Reeves & Collingham, 2018). Conveying our messages within a narrative as well as listening to the stories our residents tell us are both more likely to create engagement and trust than information alone.
- Audio and Image are both key as they increase the chance of posts being seen and increase the likelihood of the audience engaging (LGA, 2022).

5.1 Communication types

Communication types can be grouped by many methods including direction, active, passive, time relevance and channel.

The channels we choose to use to communicate affect how accurately the message will be received and can target a particular demographic or user type. Information-rich channels, such as face-to-face, convey more nonverbal information, whereas spreadsheets are likely to be less rich (University of Minnesota, 2017). It is necessary to identify a channel which will reach the audience you particularly want to engage with and work for what you want to achieve (The Health Foundation, 2023).

Focus is normally drawn to the method of communication rather than the type, with the explosion of social media technology leading to many innovations in communication, however, methods can include, websites, email, letter, posters, social media, face to face, outreach, phone and many other traditional and electronic mechanisms. Timeliness of communication should also be considered to successfully reach and engage with the audience. Is the messaging constant burn, periodic, reactive, or rapid response?

In order to better understand which communication channels are appropriate there is a need to assess and understand the following:

- What you are trying to achieve – Aim.
- Who you are trying to reach – Audience.
- The appropriate timeline to use – Constant burn, periodic, reactive, rapid response.
- The appropriate resources – Type or method of communication.

An example guide to communication channels can be found in Appendix E - Health Foundation Communication Channels Guide.

A mix of communication channels (existing and emerging) should be used: social media, official website, newsletters, community forums, physical media, local newspapers, face-to-face, press releases, blogs/vlogs, apps, and radio to engage with a wider audience, including both rich and lean channels, with each channel requiring a tailored message to the audience it serves and what it is looking to achieve. When a message has a particular demographic or audience the most effective channel should be used to reach that audience, choosing the right channels rather than ones that are familiar is paramount.

Internal communication includes items which are private, or restricted within a specific group, such as Committee, Council, Work Group, working drafts, or documents not for external publication. Whereas external communication can include, stakeholders, third-party groups and the public. External communications should all be freely available to councillors and staff either prior to or at the time of publication.

Both of these types of communication can be one or two-way depending on the content. Examples of one-way communication include announcements, signposting, guidance and information, sharing of resources such as gov.uk or the KPC website, and notification that items are available to view on the VSM, where information is provided, and no direct response is required. Two-way communication on the other hand actively seeks a response or feedback, this could include surveys, emails, verbal discussions, outreach sessions, etc.

Active communications require the recipient to engage and possibly respond. In contrast, passive communication does not necessarily require a response but provides information for consumption and engagement if appropriate to the individual, examples of this could be a Facebook Group Page or a poster.

Maintenance of social media accounts is vital to ensure profiles remain current, updates are shared, and stakeholder engagement is maintained. Comments and messages should be responded to promptly and responses should be limited only when necessary to ensure clarity.

5.2 Community Engagement and Outreach

The Cambridge Dictionary definition of outreach is "an effort to bring services or information to people where they live or spend time" (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, n.d.).

The intended outcome of a KPC Outreach programme is to open up new channels of two-way communication with key stakeholders. These stakeholders will include but are not limited to parish residents, local businesses, schools and other community groups. This would give us a much broader understanding of what a cross-section of our community wants and needs from the Parish Council as well as allowing us to help them know about what the council are already doing for them.

The two key characteristics of an Outreach programme are firstly that the engagement happens outside of council premises and secondly, it is face to face. Another way of thinking of a KPC Outreach programme is "taking the council to the people".

Outreach offers the opportunity for our stakeholders to see their councillors as approachable real people who care deeply about our community. This also is an opportunity to engage face to face with our stakeholders for whom our other communication methods don't work.

The ideal locations for Outreach activities to take place are where there is high footfall and/or where people feel comfortable and safe.

Examples of potential Outreach locations:

- The Saturday market in High Street.
- Supermarket foyers.
- Kidlington foodbank on Fridays at the Baptist Church.
- Cherwell Larder at Exeter Hall on Saturdays.
- Any sports matches/clubs - Football, Rugby, Running, Bowls, Cricket, etc.
- School fetes.
- Social groups - Kidlington Gardening club, Foresters Hall (Sunday lunches), Kidlington Historical Society.
- Coffee shops, cafes, pubs.
- Local businesses and shops.

Examples of possible Outreach themes:

- Meet your councillors.
- What have the council ever done for us?
- Drop-in councillor surgeries.
- Finding out about the great things people are doing in our community and celebrate them.
- Gather feedback on specific topics. e.g. The Skatepark proposal.
- Share information on things happening in our community (not just what the parish council are doing).

Having a clear policy for community engagement is a piece of evidence looked for in the Local Council Award Scheme.

"A community engagement policy demonstrates the council's commitment to hearing what people in the community think and communicating its own actions and decisions." (NALC, 2021, p. 12)

Like all communication, Community Engagement is likely to be most effective when it is planned in line with the overall council strategy and core values.

6 Why is effective communication needed?

“Effective communication is critical for councils to build trust with the community and promote engagement” (Purchase, 2023). Good internal and external communication would allow Kidlington Parish Council to:

- Gain a wider and more inclusive understanding of the views and needs across the whole of our very diverse community, by collecting feedback and learning about their concerns enabling us to make informed decisions.
- Build trust and support alongside demonstrating our commitment to transparency and openness, two of the seven Nolan principles (UK Government, 1995).
- Promote community engagement across both community activities and civic participation.
- To enable councillors to be strong ambassadors for the council and collaborate on projects and documentation more effectively.
- To ensure that the Councils values and priorities are understood by our community in line with our strategy.

As identified within the Literature Review, effective internal and external communication supports every aspect of the Parish Council’s work and the importance of it in helping the Parish Council maximise our potential should not be underestimated.

6.1 Determining the effectiveness of communication

An LGA #FutureComms article focused on how to evaluate local government communication starts from the premise that “Excellent communications brings your organisation and community together.” (LGA, n.d.)

Effective communication is much more than disseminating information. Effective communication delivers and listens to, messages across our diverse community. The LGA #FutureComms article which asks, “Do your comms really work?” makes the key point that “The nub of the issue is how do you help the public understand and scrutinise a complex world to help it evolve, rather than reacting against it with anger?” (LGA, 2018). This means that whilst we can review usage stats, such as page views, they do not in themselves tell us if our communication is effective.

The move away from statistical measures in communication to one of impact is prevalent in the guidance from both the NALC and LGA, this requires us to think about determining effectiveness in direct relation to the goals of our communications plan and how we can measure if our message has been not just received but understood.

To be able to measure the effectiveness of the messages in our communications we first need to define what our key messages are. This requires that the council has a clear strategy of its aims and values (values and priorities) to allow us to define what our key messages should be at any point in the year. We then need to look for evidence of the impact of that message in the behaviour of our community.

For example, if a key message we wanted to communicate was that the Parish Council can be trusted, evidence of effectiveness could be sought in an increased level of trust in the comments from our community on social media posts. Or if the key message was how much safer our 20 mph speed limits make our village, evidence of effectiveness could be sought in reduced levels of speeding and our message being echoed by our residents in their own social media posts.

To determine how effective our communication is, we need to measure movement over time of thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours relevant to the message we wished to communicate.

The LGA advises councils to make use of an evaluation framework to undertake assessment of effectiveness (LGA, 2018) such as the GCS Evaluation Framework 2.0 (Government Communication Service, 2022) which gives us this advice for metrics (Government Communication Service, 2022):

“Metrics are divided according to the 4 categories identified by AMEC:

- Inputs (what we put in, our planning and content creation)
- Outputs (what is produced, such as audience reach)
- Outtakes (subject-oriented stakeholder experiences and communicator-oriented learning about communication practice)
- Outcomes (stakeholder behaviour, what the impact of communication and engagement activity is, and whether we achieved the desired organisational impact or policy aim)”

We propose that to measure effectiveness we utilise the following process:

- Set messaging goals in a strategic communication plan that align with the values and strategic aims of the council (values and priorities).
- Identify trends and/or indicators relevant to that goal.
- Measure movement of identified trends and/or indicators over time.
- Assess level of effectiveness based on movement of trends and/or indicators for our messaging goals.

Measuring metrics such as volume of communication, readability scores on written communication, use of images in communications and volume of engagements responses, including comments, likes or clickthrough’s to our website could all be relevant indicators that we could use.

We also propose that we consider longitudinal studies through polls that can be replicated at intervals. This could support the measure of movement in thoughts, attitudes and behaviours in a more easily comparable way. These could be conducted through social media polls, polls at annual meetings, polls on our website or the poll feature on a community engagement app should we choose to provide one. An example of how this can work can be seen in a recent research report from the LGA looking at the data from round 36 of Polling on Resident Satisfaction with Councils (LGA, 2023).

7 Current Situation.

7.1 Stakeholder demographics

Kidlington is relatively un-deprived, with one area (Kidlington East 017E) ranked in the 10% most deprived nationally on the Education and Skills domain (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2023). There is a lower than UK average number of lone parent families with dependent children, and a higher than average number of married households, with co-habiting households similar to the national average (OCSI, 2021a) (OCSI, 2021b). Unemployment levels are low in the Kidlington area at approximately half the national average. Life expectancy is higher for both males (82) and females (85) than the national average, as is Healthy Life Expectancy (OCSI, 2021a) (OCSI, 2021b).

The table below shows the deprivation scores for Kidlington in 2015, it can be seen that education is clearly the weakest measure.

LSOA name (2016 ward and LSOA end code)	IMD	Income	Employment	Education	Health	Crime	Barriers	Environment	IDACI	IDAOP1
Kidlington North 017A	10	9	10	6	8	7	9	10	8	9
Kidlington North 017B	10	10	10	9	9	7	7	10	9	10
Kidlington North 017C	7	6	7	5	5	9	9	8	5	6
Kidlington North 019A	8	9	10	5	9	10	2	7	6	9
Kidlington South 017D	10	9	10	9	8	8	8	8	9	8
Kidlington South 017E	5	5	5	2	5	8	4	10	5	5
Kidlington South 018A	9	7	7	7	8	8	8	7	6	9
Kidlington South 018B	7	6	6	4	6	9	5	6	6	8
Kidlington South 018C	9	9	9	5	7	9	8	9	9	8
Kidlington South 018D	7	6	6	3	7	6	7	9	6	9

Numbers = deprivation decile (compared with all areas in England) where 1 = most deprived 10% nationally and 10= least deprived 10% nationally.

IDACI=Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index; IDAOP1=Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index

Figure 4. JSNA, 2019 - 2015 Indices of deprivation (IMD2015).

The population pyramid for Kidlington shows an overall decline in the number of people aged 10-29 and 40-49 and an increase in people aged 30-39 and 55+ (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2023). This confirms a continuing theme of a diminishing younger population as shown in the ONS population records, table below, and also the 2021 Census data (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

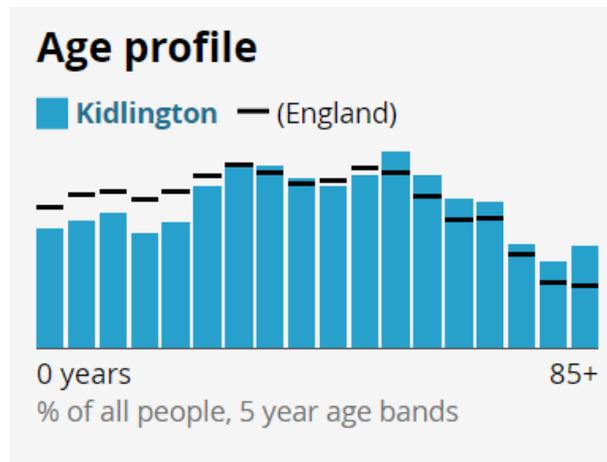


Figure 5. Age Profile – Kidlington. (Office for National Statistics, 2023)

84% of residents see themselves as having a UK identity compared to 88% nationally, with white being the largest ethnic grouping at 83.6% and Asian being the second at 8.9%. 61.2% of the population is economically active which is larger than the national average (57.4%), with the largest occupation group being professional L4,5,6 being the largest socio-economic grouping.

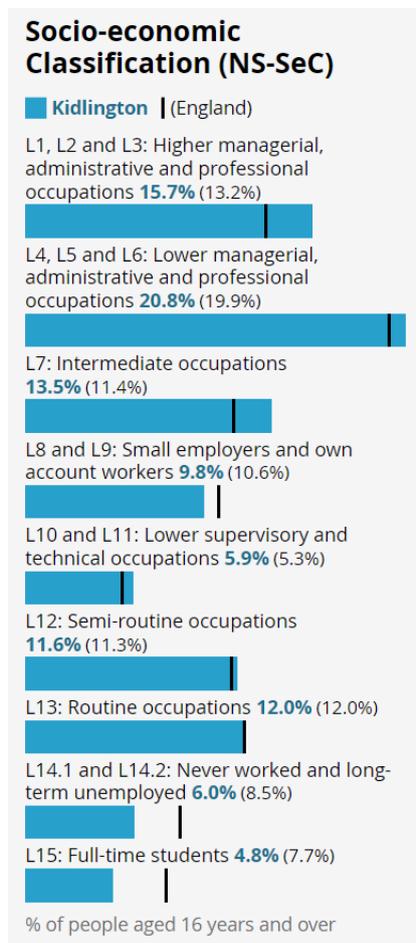


Figure 6 Socio-economic Classification and Occupation (Office for National Statistics, 2023)

Some hospital admissions are significantly worse than the UK average, these include under five emergency admissions, emergency admissions for 15-24 year olds and hospital stays for self-harm (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2023). Localised health provision in the area shows that Gosford Hill MC records a higher prevalence of dementia than the national average, and the Key Medical centre records significantly higher levels of depression than the national average, which could concur with the self-harm emergency admissions (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2023).

7.2 Internal Communications

Methods of communication currently used within KPC include meetings, a shared document storage area, email, face-to-face discussions and more recently WhatsApp messaging.

Meetings are the primary means through which members of the council formally discuss topics, and agree (resolve) or recommend matters, the management of these is laid down in legislation and KPC Standing Orders (Kidlington Parish Council, 2023). In addition to Full Council, there are Committees which have specific responsibilities (ToR) such as; Community, and Policy & Finance, and Working Groups, the regulation for how these meetings are carried out are laid down in our Standing Orders. Council Committee Meetings must be held in person as per the Local Government Act 1972 (UK Parliament, 2023). Members of the public are allowed to attend meetings unless they are closed for specific reasons.

For document storage, KPC uses a shared area called VSMSHare, this was setup by KPC's IT provider and allows documents to be uploaded so they can be viewed by any councillor. While this allows for a degree of version control, it does not provide true collaborative working capability as only office staff have the ability to upload or write documents.

This contrasts with modern collaborative working systems such as [Microsoft 365](#) or [Google Workspace](#). In these systems, documents can be uploaded to a shared area by (normally) anyone in the organisation, and they can also be edited simultaneously if required by a large number of people. This enables teams to share common files, work collaboratively on documentation, and have areas for collective working and shared project theme areas, thereby reducing resource costs and providing document version control.

KPC's primary method of internal communication outside of meetings is email. Each member of staff or councillor has a KPC email address. Through this, they can:

- receive information such as upcoming events or documents for upcoming meetings.
- send information to others, such as results of research into an issue.
- discuss topics with others, e.g. contributing ideas towards an ongoing project.

The email system is provided by the same company as the VSMSHare (Microshade) and is a method of communication that is familiar to the majority of the council's staff/members. It is accessed via a browser-based webmail page. Communication over email can become difficult as threads tend to become long and disjointed, leaving recipients unclear about the flow of discussion or current thoughts. The email system includes a calendar function, but this is currently used very little. This could be used as a centralised way of informing Councillors about upcoming meetings with stakeholders. Doing so would be more effective than informing by email, as it would allow the details of a meeting to be updated in all recipients' calendars simultaneously.

7.3 External communications

KPC communicates with external stakeholders in a variety of ways. These include Chair David Robey's involvement in a Four Parishes group, and discussion between councillors in KPC and other councils (e.g. Cherwell District Council – CDC - and Oxfordshire County Council – OCC). Methods used to reach non-council stakeholders include the KPC website, newsletter, notice boards, social media, and meetings. These are discussed in the following subsections.

7.4 Website

KPC operates a website, www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk. This was launched in 2018 and its infrastructure is provided by Vision ICT. Content is posted on the site by Finance Officer/Planning Assistant Jo Gaul, but Chair David Robey also has editing access. Via email, Council Clerk Rachel Faulkner described the website as having the following uses (Faulkner, 2023):

- Ensuring council transparency for residents (e.g. making meeting agendas, papers and minutes accessible).
- Providing information on the Council's finances and assets.
- Supplying general information about the village.
- Promoting local events (although she thought this area could be improved upon).
- Providing information about local organisations (although she recognised this is difficult to keep up to date).

The Clerk also stated a desire for the website to include more information about local volunteering opportunities, in a "one stop shop" style.

While gathering feedback from the Clerk and Jo, they both thought the website should have more pictures and use a more eye-catching design. Jo thought the site should have a "complete overhaul" and suggested that future content includes:

- More information about Kidlington's parks.
- More about what the Council does in and for the village.
- A news page that's separate from events, to make the two categories more inviting.
- A contact page for members of the public to more easily get in touch with their councillors.

Jo also commented that uploading to the current website "works well and is easy". It is also important that the website is optimised to ensure that when content within the website is being searched for via a search engine, users will find the right page within the website. For example, Councillor Easdown Babb performed a Google search on November 30th, 2023, to find the details of the Christmas Lights Switch On. The KPC website was the 10th result, after results with the timings of the 2018 and 2019 events. The page listed in the Google results was the KPC website homepage, not the event page. Furthermore, manually navigating from the homepage to the page for the Switch On (since deleted) displayed only an image, which did not include alternative text. This meant it could not be accessed by screen readers, so the information was likely completely unavailable to people who use that technology, for example, people with severe visual impairments. See Appendix H - Christmas Light Switch On Web Results. for more details.

Note from Clerk:

Vision ICT comment on this is that the old events often appear higher in search engine listings because they have been visited more regularly.

Various technical aspects of the website are important to consider alongside the content points already mentioned. These include accessibility and encryption.

The industry standard for website accessibility is the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#) (WCAG 2.0), issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) in December 2008 (World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), 2008). The footer of the KPC website links to an accessibility statement page, which identifies that "some parts of this website aren't fully accessible". It also says that the statement was last reviewed in August 2020 (Kidlington Parish Council, 2020). (This has now been updated to February 2024). If the website is to be maintained going forwards, its compliance with WCAG 2.0 should be assessed and it should be made as compliant as reasonably practicable. The image alternative text issue described above is the type of issue that WCAG 2.0 aims to avoid. To be effective, we also need to consider the website in terms of how users experience the site, the ease of navigation, and the inclusivity of the design (LGA, 2022). Ensuring users can easily find what they have visited the site for and that they feel able to engage with the site is important. The Government Digital Service has clear guidelines on website content to ensure usability (Government Digital Service, 2023). The KPC site does not currently comply with these guidelines.

Encryption is a type of information security. If a website is encrypted, the user can be confident that the site's presented content is legitimately from the proper source. Encryption also enables sensitive information such as contact details or bank card details to be sent across the internet securely. Website encryption is usually denoted by the site's address starting with https:// rather than http://. The KPC website currently uses http, so does not support encryption. This would be a security risk for any users submitting a query using the form on the Contact Us page (shown in Figure 7). This is because the lack of encryption means it would be fairly trivial for a malicious party to access the user's submitted information, which would include their name and email address as well as potentially their organisation and phone number. This must be rectified immediately.

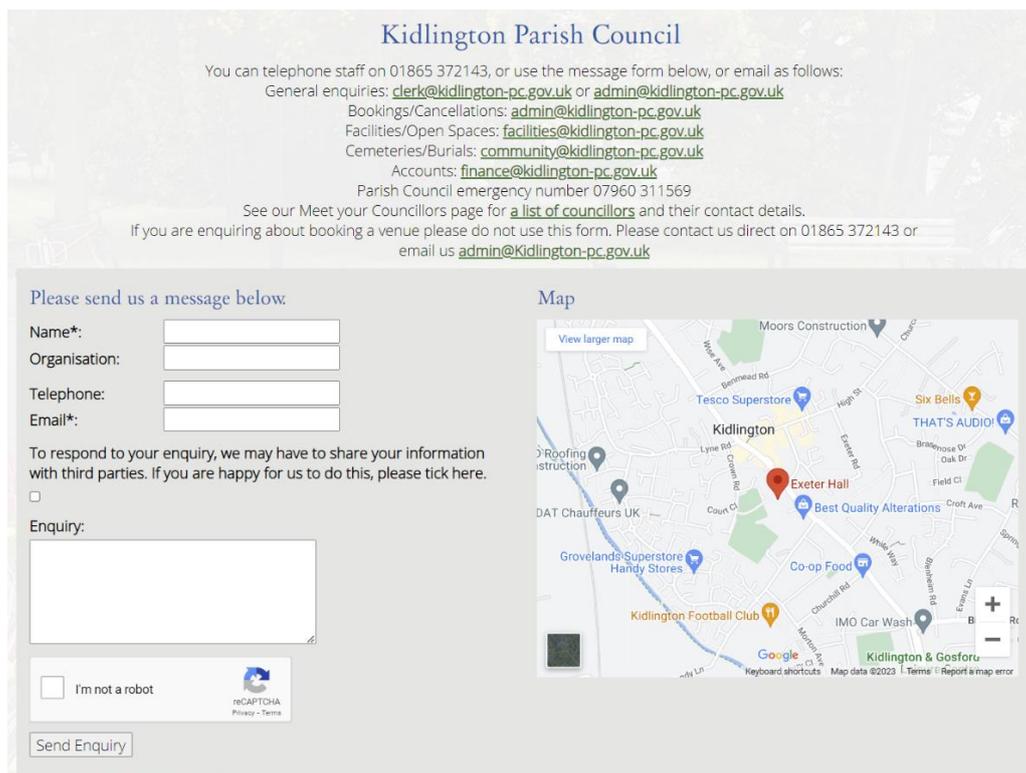


Figure 7. Information submitted using the form on the left of the Contact Us page would not be secure.

7.5 Newsletter

The Council currently publishes a physical newsletter annually which is distributed via a postal delivery to all OX5 1 and OX5 2 residents. This method includes residents outside of the Parish but is used because it is more cost effective than the hand deliveries that would be required to be Parish-specific.

The Communications Group ran a survey at the Gala Day in July 2023. This asked nine questions about respondents' current communication methods and their demographics. The results are shown in full in Appendix C – Gala Day Survey Results. A majority of the 47 respondents said they had heard about the Gala Day from either word of mouth (20: 43%) or a poster (17: 36%). Only four (9%) said they had heard about the Gala Day via the newsletter. This could be explained by not many people remembering it: 29 respondents (62%) said they did not recall receiving a Parish newsletter by post, with a further nine (19%) unsure.

Over half (24: 51%) of those who responded to the survey said they would be interested in receiving a digital version of the Parish newsletter. 10 (21%) were unsure, while 13 (28%) said they would not be interested in a digital version. The survey also asked how the responder finds out what's happening in Kidlington. A 77% majority (36 responses) selected word of mouth, with Facebook the second most popular method (19: 40%). These results suggest that there would be strong appetite for a digital newsletter and

that the current lack of digital sources other than Facebook may be hindering communication across the village.

Note from Clerk:

The newsletter is available on the website.

7.6 Notice Boards

The Parish Council has notice boards at a variety of locations around the village. The main ones are outside Exeter Hall, in the village centre near Barclays and in Garden City next to Broadway (Figure 9). Their primary purpose is to post agendas for meetings and other official notifications. They can also be used by the public to promote events, but this must be approved by KPC's office staff each time. Items are attached to notice boards by KPC's grounds team.

There are also notice boards in the main hall at Exeter Hall, at both cemeteries and the village's four allotment sites. The board inside Exeter Hall is mostly used to promote community events, while those at the cemeteries and allotments display rules and regulations of burial grounds, and allotment-related items, respectively. The railings next to Exeter Close, opposite the junction between Oxford Road and Sterling Road Approach, are used to advertise KPC's three main events – the Gala Day, Fireworks Night and Christmas Lights Switch On, and other local events with certain parameters.



Figure 8. The Garden City notice board in December 2023.

Clerk Rachel Faulkner has stated by email that our allotment and cemetery notice boards “could be used for more” and this Communication Group agrees. For example, the Council could consider using them to advertise any internal jobs, or community events that have been selected as part of a community engagement strategy.

Notes from Clerk:

Bus Shelters – The council has an agreement with PrimeSite media who look after our bus shelters. Ad Shells are used on the sides of the shelters on either end of the village three times a year to promote our main events.

7.7 Social Media

KPC currently (December 2023) has accounts on two social media platforms: [Facebook](#) and [Nextdoor](#). On Facebook, there is [a Page](#) set up under the name “Kidlington Parish Council”. Use of this was regained in September 2023 after making it compatible with Facebook's new Pages system. As of December 21st, 2023, the Page has approximately 1,000 ‘likes’. Any posts on the Page will be visible to anyone who has liked it, so

the Page can reach a large number of people quickly. Posts on the page tend to be about upcoming community events. It could be used more actively, for example by following local businesses or community groups (e.g. Cherwell Collective or similar). This would make their posts easier to share on our Page and would encourage them to follow us in return. Councillors could also post on the page themselves to give updates on what they have been doing as part of their Councillor role. As discussed earlier, a significant proportion of the people who already interact with KPC hear about what is happening in Kidlington via Facebook. This makes it an important platform for us to utilise frequently and to the best of its potential.

The Facebook Page is linked a profile that is also under the name Kidlington Parish Council. This is used to represent the person running the page. The profile is now (completed in Sept 2023) linked to the email address for the Clerk role (clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk), rather than an individual's, so access to it will not be lost if the holder of the Clerk position changes in future.

On Nextdoor, a [Kidlington Parish Council account](#) serves a similar purpose to the Facebook Page. It is also used to post about community events but is more sporadic. The account is currently owned by Les Dent, KPC's Community/Projects Officer. The Council should ensure that the email address used for this is an officer role one as with the Facebook Page.

Nextdoor tends to have a more combative atmosphere than some other platforms, so it may not be the most useful place for us to post. However, the site should still be monitored as a way of gathering feedback from the public.

7.8 Meetings

Council meetings are normally open to the public (unless discussing confidential matters or under other exceptional circumstances). These take place at Exeter Hall, usually in the small hall. Provision for the public to join Full Council meetings via Zoom is also provided, although they must have their camera and microphone switched off throughout.

Some members of the Council also attend meetings of other bodies and Councils. This presence can be in an advisory capacity, to represent the parish's needs, or simply for the Council to gain additional information to help guide its own activities.

Notes from Clerk:

KPC officers deal with residents queries every day at Exeter Hall or via email or phone calls. Officers have direct regular contact with allotment holders, hirers of our facilities, schools, police, CDC and OCC officers. As we know residents are unclear on the difference between a councillor and an officer and to many we are all 'the council'.

8 Conclusions

Through analysis of the literature, best practice and measuring ourselves against those standards, it is clear that there is much we could do as a council to be communicating and engaging in a more effective, strategic and inclusive way both internally and externally.

It is important that we move from an information broadcast model of communication that relies heavily on residents choosing to look for information on our website, to an approach where we are regularly telling the narrative of our council, making use of storytelling to convey not only what we are doing but our values as a council in a way that encourages feedback, reaches a wide audience and allows us to listen to our residents.

Review of the literature has highlighted the importance of a clear understanding of the council's values and priorities (aims and objectives) and of its audience and stakeholders, this can then be used to derive a strategic communication plan covering appropriate channels in order to maximise communication and encourage engagement across the parish.

9 Recommendations

At the outset this report was viewed as the initial phase in moving forward with communications, many of the improvements and identifications made here reflect a phased approach, which acknowledges the need for change and identifies specific options of choice. It is envisaged that the Communications Group continue in this vein.

Community Engagement includes communication but goes far beyond the limits of just communication. Our review of literature and best practices has shown that Councils who take a strategic approach with a clear plan for community engagement are more effective.

In order to make the improvements identified, our recommendations are as follows:

Initial proposals:

1. Carry out an exercise to identify KPC's values and priorities (aims and objectives).
2. Maintain a Communications Group to bring forward an aims-based Communications Plan and carry forward items for future phases.
3. Adoption of proposed Media Policy and Communication Strategy.
4. Create a Communications Plan based on our values and priorities that enables us to share what we do, how we do it and why we do it with all areas of our diverse community with a much greater frequency. This plan should be 'aims' based and provide details on appropriate channels, timings, follow up and expected interactions.
5. Include engagement actions within the Communications Plan and make provision for a related budget, which encompasses KPC events, face to face surgeries and other outreach areas identified in this report linked to the aims-based Communications Plan.
6. Officers and Councillors should undertake mandatory ongoing training on communications to reflect the continually evolving communication landscape and trends. The training will support the maintenance and delivery of an effective Communications Plan. Particular focus should be given to the use of social media to ensure that we are maximising its capabilities without compromising the code of conduct.
7. Officers and the Communications Group carry out a full review of the Council website, update or replace as required, with the assistance of specialists such as SLCC or CloudyIT.
8. All Councillors and Officers should have ID and Business Cards for use when speaking with residents face to face.
9. Request the Personnel Committee to review a Comms Lead/Officer role and any resourcing required.

Further Phase Proposals:

1. Carry out a full review alongside officers and specialists for collaborative working for councillors such as Teams - Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace and implement a chosen solution.
2. The Council to agree a solution for standard Councillor to Councillor communication which avoids extended email trails. For example, a message or chat feature such as in Teams - Microsoft 365, Google Workspace or WhatsApp.
3. Councillors should each update their Councillor Profile using the best practice models given in the Local Leadership Framework for Councillors.
4. The Council should consider subscribing to a Community Engagement App such as the one from the SLCC to facilitate wider communication beyond social media.
5. Implement use of an online calendar in Outlook for all council and group meetings, with calendar invites being sent out and responded to.
6. Launch our outreach to a Business Club to encourage businesses moving to the area to engage with the Council, and also to make contact with employees.
7. Review engagement with our under-18 (YPC) population and consider implementation of a youth forum, youth advisers or something similar.

10 Continuous improvement and evaluation

Communication and engagement are a vital part of an effective council, but also a field that will continue to evolve. Given the most successful measure of effective communication and engagement is the measurement of impact, we recommend that:

A Communications Group be maintained to monitor continuous improvement and move through future phases to support the development of the Communication Plans, and associated content plans, campaigns, and monitor and evaluate progress. This group should seek to work towards reaching the gold level of communication and community engagement as set out in the Guide to the Local Award Scheme.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Peer Council questionnaire results

Results of a questionnaire sent to peer councils and our local area.

Strategy - Table 1 – Peer council responses on strategy

	Communication Policy	Communications Strategy	Follow NALC Best Practice	ICO membership	Website Content controls	Staffing
Bicester	No – Press and Social Media Policy	No	Yes	Yes – but not an active relationship	Use Navitas	Marketer Admin role on site
Banbury	Yes	Yes	Not answered	Yes	In-house staff	Current PT member of staff to handle press releases, communicate with local press and radio stations. Plan to employ FT Comms person.
Didcot	No	No	Not sure	Yes	In house staff	
Wheatley	Yes	No – but part of the Strategic Plan	Not sure	Yes	Office staff	

Activity - Table 2 - Peer council responses on activity

	Social Media	Frequency of posts	Outreach	Event awareness channels	Newsletter frequency
Bicester	Facebook – minimal use	Linked to timetable of own events	Frequent consultation Polls on Facebook & website Targeted letters	Noticeboard Posters Parish Facebook	Printed Garth Gazette – 3 times a year
Banbury	Facebook	Daily, often multiple posts per day	Council App Monthly Councillor surgeries Town Guide	Local Newspapers Local Radio BaburyshireInfo Facebook Parish Facebook Banners / posters	Not currently, but being considered
Didcot	Facebook	Most Days	none	Facebook Website Community Buildings	Used to have, not anymore
Wheatley	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Several times a week	Two surgeries a week	Newsletter Website Facebook Posters Word of mouth Emails	Printed 6 times a year – bimonthly. External editor and hand delivered. Also available online

Appendix B – Results of survey on Facebook activity for similar Councils

Survey of Facebook activity over 12 months for councils of a similar population and density of Kidlington Council.

Table 3 -Results of survey on Facebook activity for similar Councils

Council	Residents from 2021 census data	Population density per km ²	FB followers	posts per week	Who Posts	Council Meeting Minutes, decisions or highlights	Council meeting schedule	Council Reports	Councillor surgeries (Local or district)	Council Events Promotion	Council event - write up	local community events or post reshares	Local business and commercial event promotion	E-Newsletter link	Council Vacancies	Council grants calls to apply	Polls/surveys/consultations	lost and found	Questions from residents	Parish Council work / donations	Thank you's	Archive / historic	Public Service announcements	Transport and traffic announcements	District and county council announcements	School announcements	Business Adverts events	Funding opportunities	Planning Application notifications	Pictures of the area	Election reminders	Calls for Tenders	Local employment vacancies	Value messaging	Competitions	link to You tube channel		
Kidlington	13,595	1,489	1,200	0.5	Council		annual meeting only			yes		yes	yes		yes		yes	yes																				
Heath Hayes and Wimblebury	13,403	3,438	3,700	28	Mixed		yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes											
Church Crookham	11,158	1,273	230	0.3	Council	yes - via link to blog on website	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes			yes		yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes	yes									
Southwater	11,977	787	333	1.4	Council	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes		yes		yes			yes	yes				yes											
Wilmington	7517	1,111	651	3	Council		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes				yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes													
Birchington	10,392	1,419	60	0	Council	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes				yes	yes	yes				yes	yes	yes	yes							
Brackley	16,195	2,353	5,100	11	Council	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Subscription promotion	yes			yes				yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes								
Wallingford	8455	789	2,200	4.5	Council	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes		yes	yes	yes						yes										yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Buckingham	14304	1,269	4,300	13	Council					yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			yes					yes									yes	yes	
Thame	13273	1,046	2,100	15	Council	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes			yes				yes		yes	yes	yes			yes								yes	yes		
Saffron Walden	17,018	684	2,300	8	Council					yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes			yes	yes		yes	yes	yes					yes						yes	yes		
Faringdon	8,627	575	2,300	27	Council	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes											yes		
Carterton	15,680	3,318	2,100	7	Council	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes				yes							yes		
Tavistock	12,675	953	991	5	Mixed - council and organisations	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes		yes			yes		yes						yes							yes	
Devizes	16,384	1,238	2,000	5	Council		yes		yes	yes		yes	yes					yes			yes	yes	yes						yes						yes			

Census and population density data taken from (Anon., n.d.) using the 2021 census data from the UK

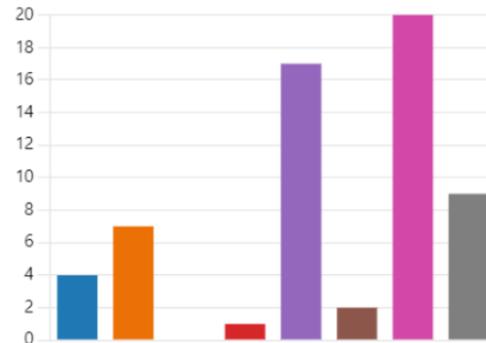
Appendix C – Gala Day Survey Results

A KPC communications survey at the Gala Day on July 22nd, 2023, had 47 responses as shown below.

1. How did you find out about the Gala Day? Please tick all that apply.

[More Details](#)

● Newsletter	4
● Facebook	7
● Instagram	0
● WhatsApp group	1
● Poster	17
● School	2
● Word of mouth	20
● Other	9



2. Do you recall receiving a Parish newsletter by post?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	9
● No	29
● Not sure	9



3. Would you be interested in receiving a digital version of the Parish newsletter?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	24
● No	13
● Not sure	10



4. How do you find out what is happening in Kidlington? Please tick all that apply.

[More Details](#)

● Facebook	19
● Twitter	0
● WhatsApp	3
● Instagram	1
● Snapchat	0
● KPC website	2
● Community group	9
● Word of mouth	36
● Other	4

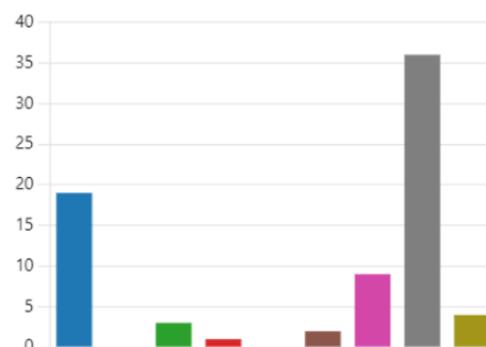
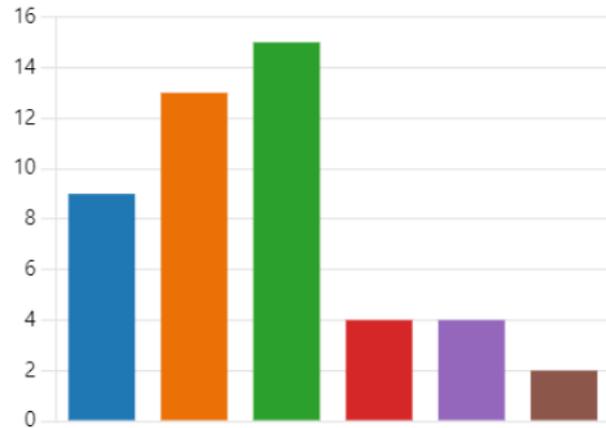


Figure 9 -Gala Day survey questions 1-4

5. How well do you feel connected to your local community?

[More Details](#)

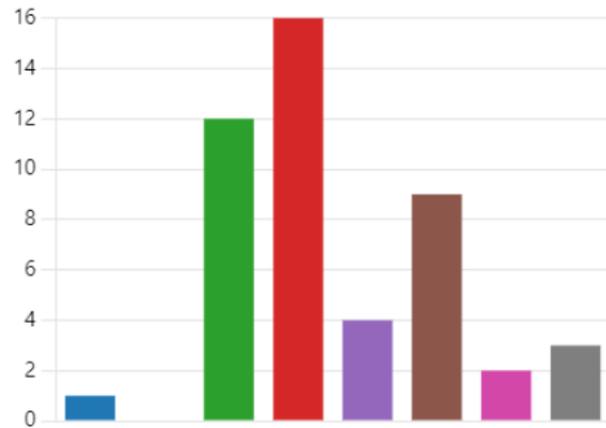
● Very well connected	9
● Somewhat well connected	13
● Neutral	15
● Not very well connected	4
● Not at all connected	4
● Not sure	2



6. Please select your age range.

[More Details](#)

● Under 18	1
● 18-24	0
● 25-34	12
● 35-44	16
● 45-54	4
● 55-64	9
● 65-74	2
● 75 and over	3



7. Please choose the option below that matches your postcode.

[More Details](#)

● OX5 1	26
● OX5 2	14
● Other	7

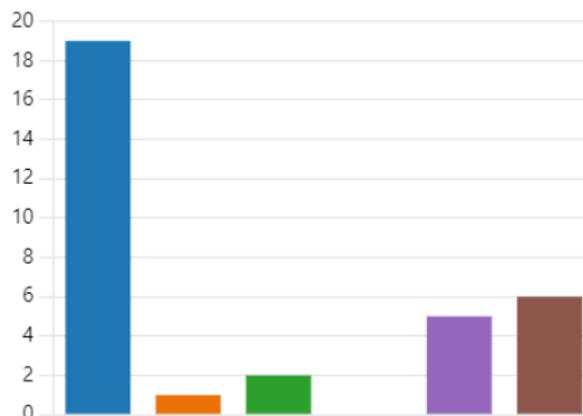


Figure 10 - Gala Day survey questions 5-7

8. Please select your village within OX5 1.

[More Details](#)

● Kidlington	19
● Yarnton	1
● Begbroke	2
● Thrupp	0
● Shipton-on-Cherwell	5
● Other	6



9. Please select your village within OX5 2.

[More Details](#)

● Kidlington	12
● Hampton Poyle	0
● Islip	1
● Oddington	0
● Charlton-on-Otmoor	0
● Murcott	0
● Other	1

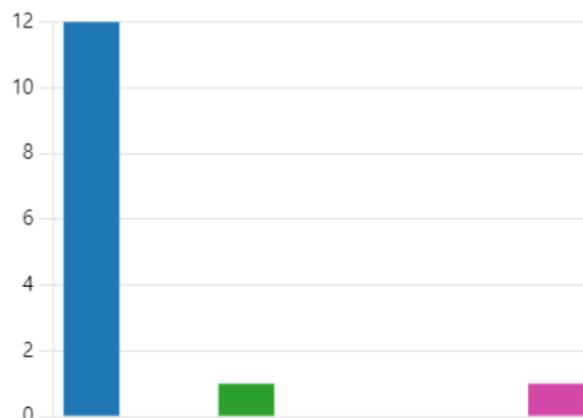


Figure 11 - Gala Day survey questions 8 and 9

Appendix D - Online Poll Results.

Kidlington Parish Council Communication Group Survey 2023 – 247 Responses.

How well do you feel you understand what the Parish Council is responsible for in Kidlington?
246 responses

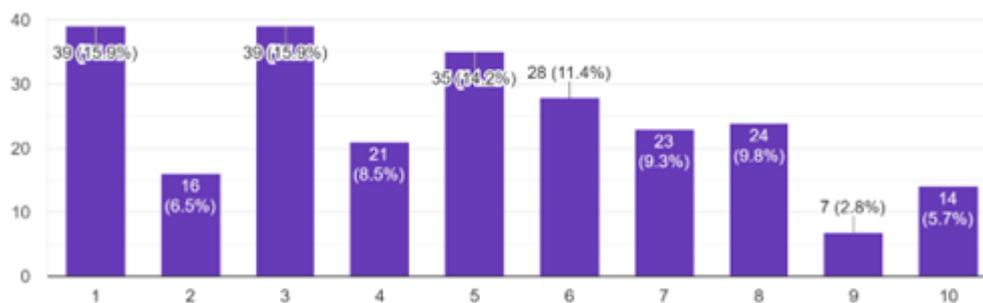


Table 3

Row Labels	Average of "How well do you feel you understand what the Parish Council is responsible for in Kidlington?"	Sum of Value
18-24	4.3	3
25-34	3.5	16
35-44	4.3	51
45-54	4.6	61
55-64	4.6	54
65-74	5.6	41
75 and over	6.2	17
Under 18	6.0	1
(blank)	6.0	3
Grand Total	4.8	247

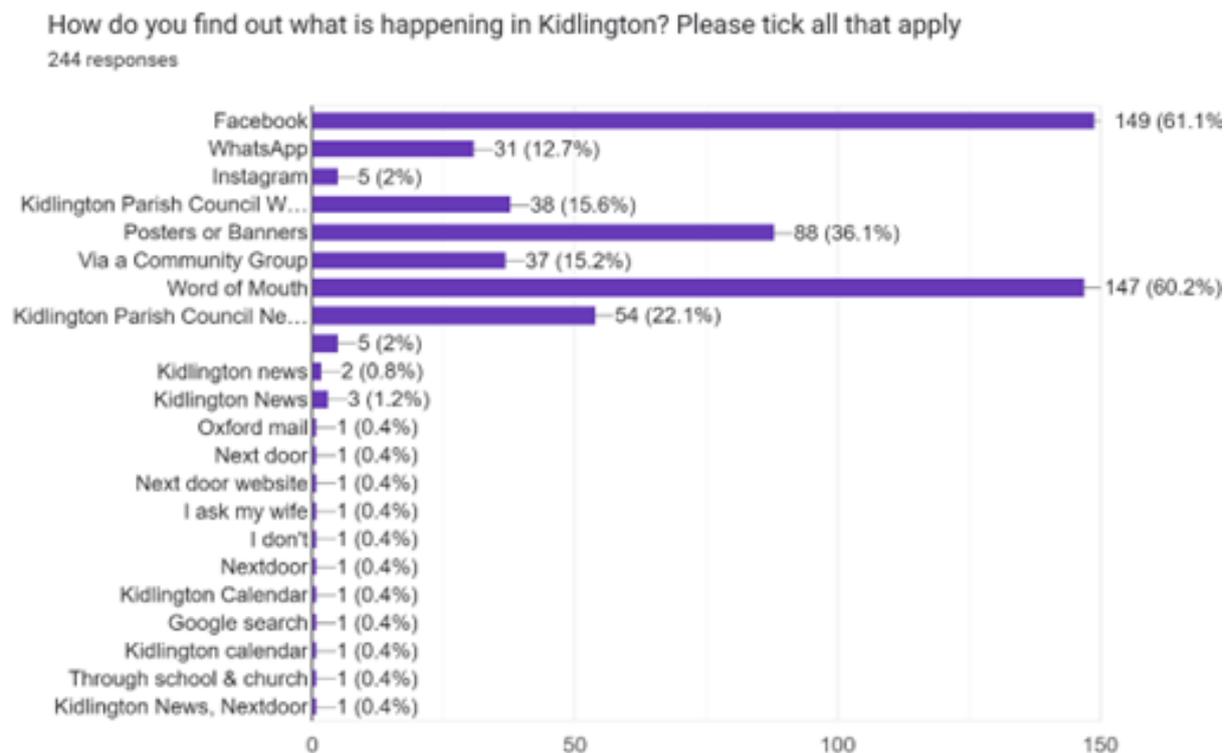


Table 4 – “How do you find out what is happening in Kidlington?” response percentages

Information source	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	Under 18
Facebook	0%	41%	27%	28%	30%	20%	11%	100%
Instagram	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
KPC Website	0%	5%	6%	4%	7%	10%	9%	0%
Via a Community Group	0%	5%	6%	5%	10%	5%	7%	0%
KPC Newsletter	40%	0%	5%	15%	11%	12%	17%	0%
Posters or Banners	40%	9%	19%	15%	11%	14%	20%	0%
Word of Mouth	20%	36%	28%	24%	24%	23%	30%	0%
Kidlington News	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	4%	2%	0%
School	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Church	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
WhatsApp	0%	5%	8%	4%	5%	7%	0%	0%
Next Door	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Google Search	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ask my wife	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
I don't	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Kidlington Calendar	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Oxford Mail	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%

Table 5

Information source	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	Under 18	Only use this source
Facebook		9	34	43	36	20	5	1	26
Instagram			2	1	2				
KPC Website		1	7	7	8	10	4		
Via a Community Group		1	8	8	12	5	3		5
KPC Newsletter	2		6	24	13	12	8		
Posters or Banners	2	2	24	24	13	14	9		4
Word of Mouth	1	8	35	37	29	23	14		28
Kidlington News					1	4	1		
School				1					
Church				1					
WhatsApp		1	10	7	6	7			
Next Door				1	1	1	1		2
Google Search				1					
Ask my wife					1				
I don't				1					
Kidlington Calendar						1	1		1
Oxford Mail						1			
	5	22	126	156	122	98	46	1	

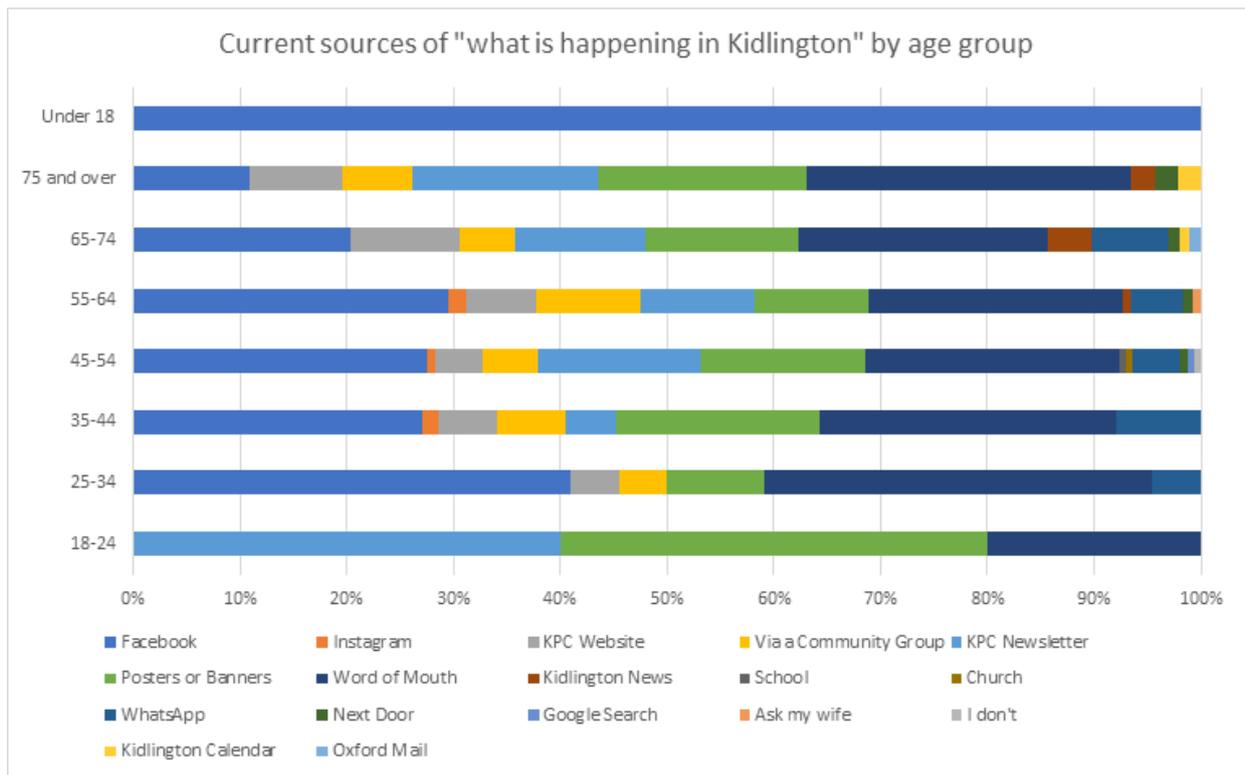


Figure 12 – Gala Day survey: current sources of "what is happening in Kidlington" by age group.

How would you like to be able to find out what is happening in Kidlington? Please tick the 3 most useful

245 responses

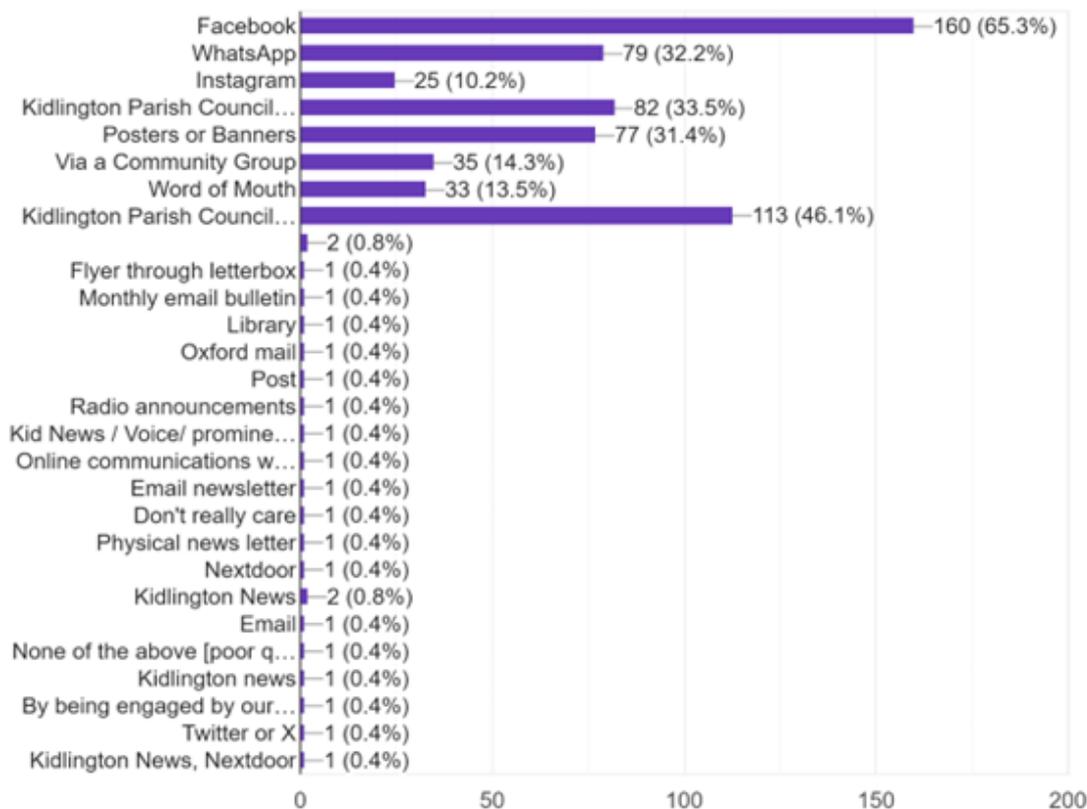


Table 6

Information source	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	Under 18	Only use this source
Facebook		11	36	46	40	21		6	15
Instagram		5	9	4	5			1	10
KPC Website	2	5	7	17	17	14		9	1
Via a Community Group	1	2	3	9	9	7		4	1
KPC Newsletter	3	5	17	22	23	26		12	
Posters or Banners	3	8	22	18	11	8		6	1
Word of Mouth		3	12	8	6	3		2	1
WhatsApp		2	16	21	19	16		5	6
E-Newsletter				1	1				
Don't care				1					
Twitter / X			1						
Councillor in person outreach			1						
Email			1						
Monthly e bulletin				1					
Flyer through Letterbox / Post			1	1					2
Kidlington News						1	3		
Kidlington Voice							1		
Prominent noticeboard							1		
Nextdoor				1	1				1
Radio			1						
Library							1		
Oxford Mail						1			
None of the above							1		
	9	41	126	149	132	98		44	3

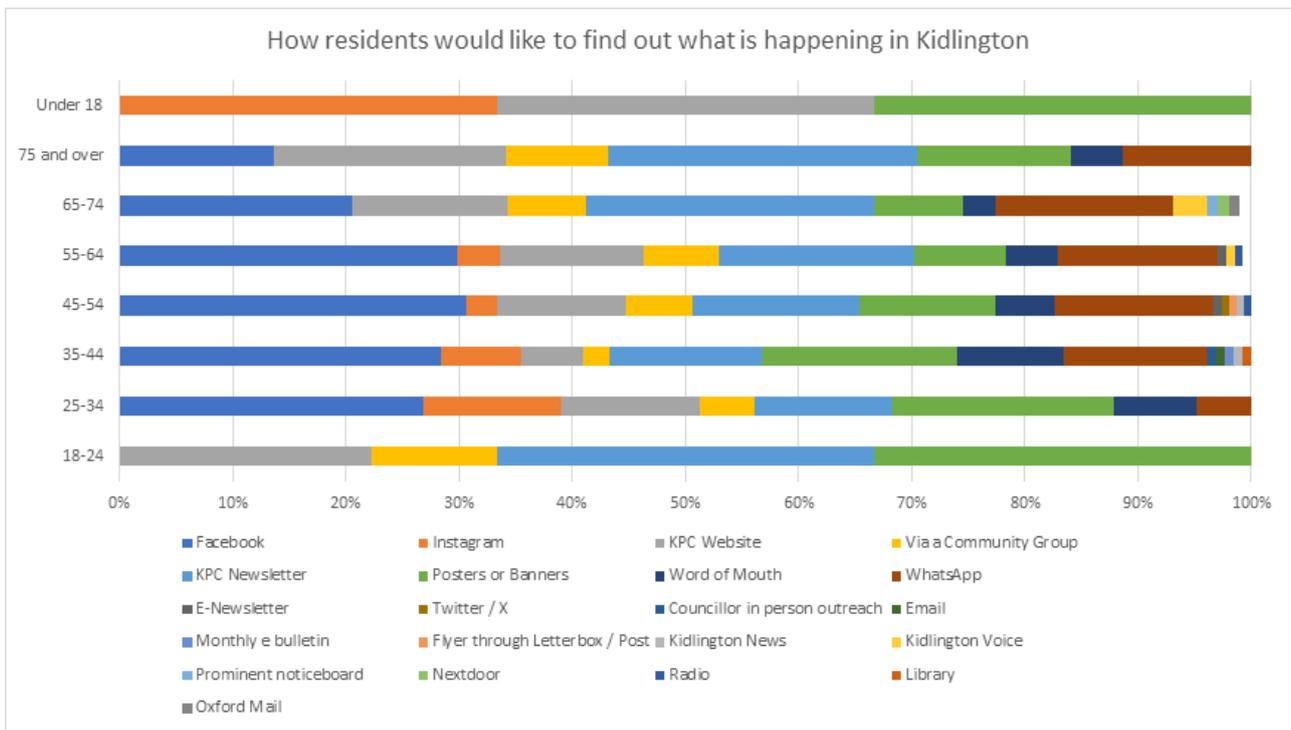


Figure 13 -How residents would like to find out what is happening in Kidlington.

Table 7

Row Labels	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	Under 18	(blank)	Grand Total
Annually		4	3	5	2	2	1			17
Digital version?			1							1
Digital versions should be published more frequently.			1							1
Don't have a view				1						1
Don't bother				1						1
Don't know, but surely if only published once a year it's not much of a newsletter?				1						1
Four times a year (every 3 months)		4	19	26	27	19	8			103
I've never seen the newsletter			1							1
Maybe twice but perhaps not practical. Ideally some electronic but realise that excludes some.						1				1
Monthly		5	10	12	8	9	2	1	1	48
Monthly if distributed digitally			1							1
Never!			1							1
No idea what's in it so couldn't say			1							1
Not really interested in paper comms			1							1
Six times a year (every 2 months)	3		5	4	4	5	1			22
Twice a year (every 6 months)		2	7	11	13	5	5			43
(blank)		1							2	3
Grand Total	3	16	51	61	54	41	17	1	3	247

The Kidlington Parish Council Newsletter is currently published annually. How frequently would you like it to be published?

244 responses

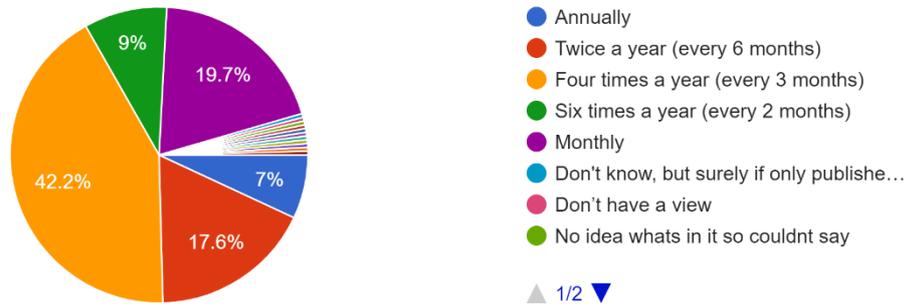


Figure 14 -

Would you be interested in receiving a digital version of the Parish Newsletter?

244 responses

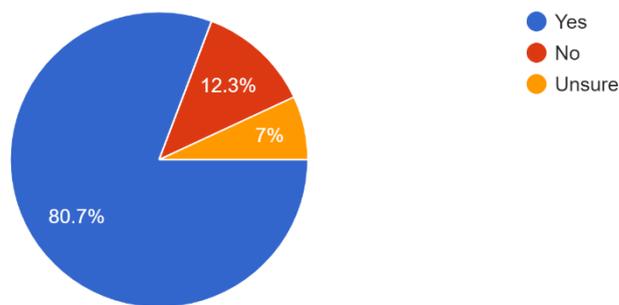


Figure 15 -

Which of the following would you like to see as the Parish Council's top priority?

245 responses

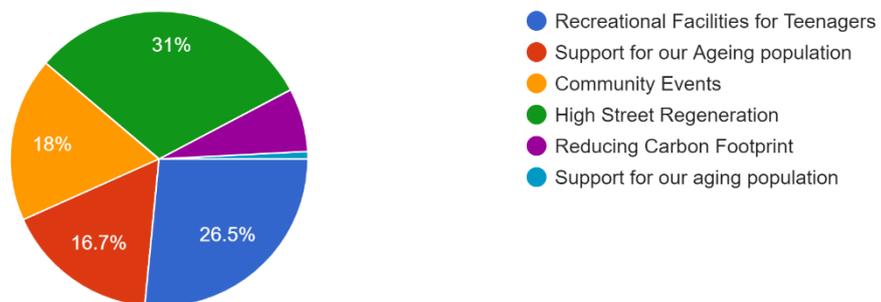


Figure 16 -

Table 8 -

Row Labels	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	Under 18 (blank)	Grand Total	
Community Events	2	6	14	9	5	8			44	
High Street Regeneration		4	17	17	18	16		4	76	
Recreational Facilities for Teenagers		3	15	24	13	6		3	65	
Reducing Carbon Footprint		3	4	7	2	1			17	
Support for our Ageing population	1		1	2	16	10		10	41	
Support for our aging population (blank)				2					2	
Grand Total	3	16	51	61	54	41	17	1	3	247

Please select your age range

244 responses

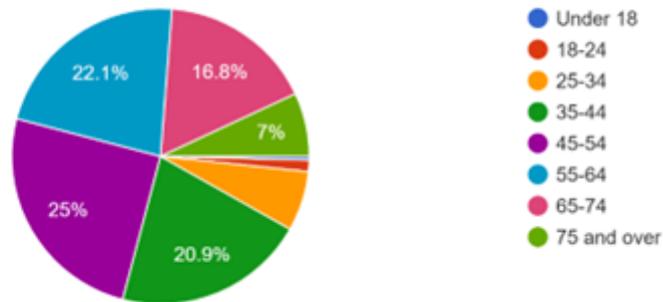


Figure17

Please choose the option below that matches your postcode

243 responses

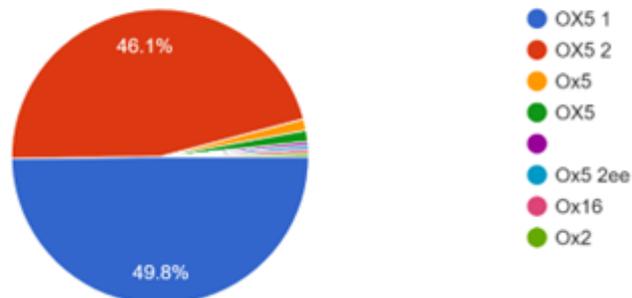
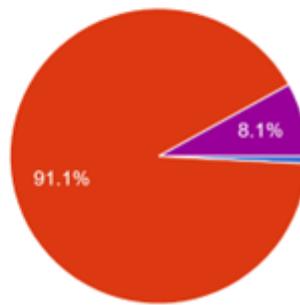


Figure 18

Please select your village (OX5 1)

124 responses

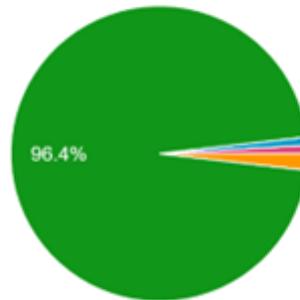


- Begbroke
- Kidlington
- Shipton-on-Cherwell
- Thrupp
- Yarnton

Figure 19

Please select your village (OX5 2)

111 responses



- Charlton-on-Otmoor
- Hampton Poyle
- Islip
- Kidlington
- Murcott
- Oddington
- Gosford

Figure 20

Section
2

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS:
 a guide



It is recommended that you approach your choice of communications channels with an open mind. Consider which channels will be most effective to reach and engage your audiences. Resist the impulse to revert automatically to channels that you have used previously, or that you are familiar with, unless and until you know they are the right channels for your project and your audiences.

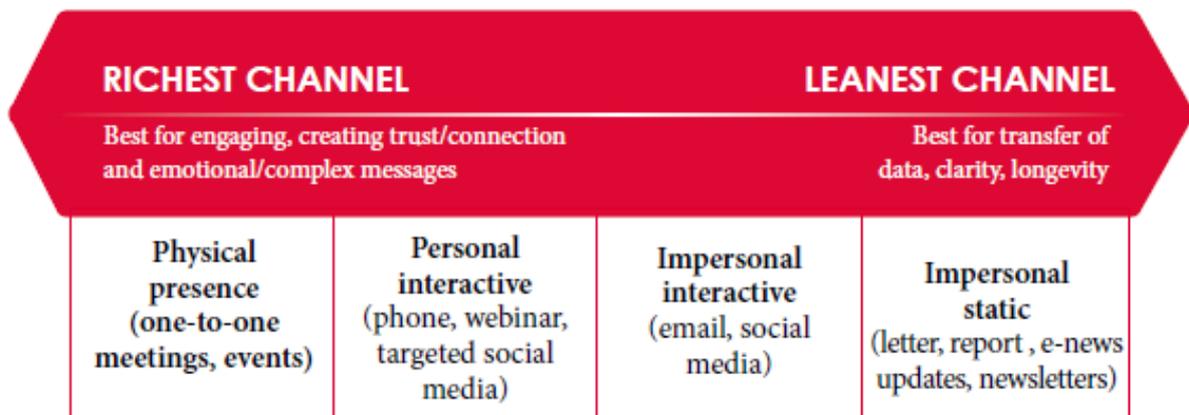
There are three questions that can guide your choice of communications channels:

1 What channels do your target audiences already use and trust?

Think about their existing behaviour. What sources of information do they already use/respond to? Do not invest in channels that your audience do not, or will not, use and trust.

2 What is the purpose of your communication?

Some channels lend themselves to communicating complex information; some are efficient ways of delivering short pieces of relevant information. The model below illustrates this on a spectrum.



If you have a need to communicate a complex issue, then most of your channels will be on the left of the spectrum above. However, do all your channels lie at one end of the spectrum? One-to-one meetings may need to be reinforced by regular e-news updates. Mass social media communications may be augmented by carefully targeted events.

3 What resource do you have?

Social media and 'owned' media that you may have access to (existing organisational websites, e-news, newsletters, etc.) are free to use but will need a combination of set-up time and regular maintenance.

Events, printed materials, videos and media coverage will need time and budget, and you may need to bring in specialist skills. Your choice of channels will need to match the resources you have.

The channels you use to reach and engage people should depend on what you need to achieve with your communications, the preference of your target audience and the resources and budget you have available.

You may need to use a range of channels to achieve all your objectives. Some channels you may want to consider are set out in the table below.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL	GOOD FOR	CONSIDER
Group meetings, workshops, conferences	Listening, brainstorming, relationship building, building and sharing purpose, exchange of complex learning and information, building trust and loyalty, engaging early adopters.	Time and cost resource; do participants have sufficient time/motivation to attend? Timing and location: make it easy/appealing to attend or piggy back on existing meetings.
Launch events	Internal morale, stakeholder awareness, can provide a hook for media coverage.	Time and cost resource; do target audiences have sufficient interest/motivation to attend? Timing and location: make it easy/appealing to attend. Media coverage: do you have something genuinely newsworthy?
1:1 meetings	Engaging influencers/stakeholders; building knowledge and trust; building or maintaining key relationships.	The messages you want to give in the meeting and how to follow up to ensure the relationship is maintained.
Webinars	Exchange of complex information or learning; maintaining relationships; project management among dispersed teams.	Scheduling: think of a time likely to be convenient to most participants. Promoting: make sure people know about it and remind them. Organising: give it some leadership and structure. Ensure the content is engaging.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL	GOOD FOR	CONSIDER
<u>Social media (eg Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)</u>	Finding or creating networks with niche specialisation or interests; building a profile; directing to other communications (website or blog); brief, real-time updates; maintaining relationships; exchange of information/learning; place for like-minded to interact; reaching early adopters.	Content: who will post and regularly update/respond. Need to focus more time on reacting/responding to others to build relationships. How can you use this to cross-promote other comms (ie an online blog)?
Media coverage (professional and consumer media)	Credibility (a third-party endorsement) and reputation; internal morale; improving awareness; influencing debates and agendas.	Time and skills required; need to be able to respond to any interest in very short timeframes; lack of ability to 'control' the message. Plan any media activity with the knowledge of senior sponsors and their comms leads.
Film/animation	Creating an emotional connection with a cause; telling stories that can illustrate complex issues; longevity (can be used more than once).	Resource and budgets; how will you promote/distribute/make it available to ensure return on investment. Length: online films should be as short as possible (one–three minutes as a general rule).
Website (and/or intranet sites)	Credibility; demonstrating full range of work; attracting new members/audiences; information exchange; accessibility.	Time and cost resource for initial and ongoing development; ability to keep up-to-date; analytics for evaluating use/impact. Consider creating a web page hosted on the web site of the sponsor organisation/partners.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL	GOOD FOR	CONSIDER
Blogs	Demonstrating expertise, learning and knowledge transfer; content for social media; can boost traffic to website; place for like-minded to interact.	Content: a catchy title; a subject your audience cares about; a central point, argument or call to action. Promoting the blog through social media channels. Blogging through existing sites with an established audience.
Email	Low cost, regular updates; driving traffic to website or blog.	Writing style and visuals: emails are easy to delete. Ensure that content and look of yours is audience-focused and stands out from crowd.
Letter	Now more unusual/distinctive than email; easy to personalise if small print run.	Language, layout, audience focus – all usual principles for good communications apply.
Leaflet, brochure, flyer, quick reference cards	Longevity; visual impact; means of communicating quite detailed information; control of message/s.	Resource for production and effective distribution (too often they are produced without sufficient thought/budget for distribution).
Merchandise or display materials (posters, mouse mats, wall charts, Christmas cards, screensavers, pens, certificates, infographics)	Longevity; visual impact; thanking and recognising supporters and celebrating success.	Budget: is the cost justified? How will it be perceived by others? Developing tools that combine your message with useful content for your audience in a format they will use.
Online network	Facilitating information exchange; building a community.	Cloud-based and ListServ technology make this possible and affordable. Easy to set up groups through social media, eg LinkedIn, but they need to be actively maintained.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL	GOOD FOR	CONSIDER
Advertising	Communicating a strong, clear sales message; controlling how your message is received.	Can you measure its effectiveness and justify the costs involved? Can the channel owner demonstrate good return on investment and data on the readership among your audience?
Newsletters (e-news/hard copy)	Keeping a defined group of people up to date with your activities; keeping in touch.	Can you achieve more impact submitting content to existing newsletters run by others?
Mobile technology/SMS/mobile apps	Flagging new content. Quick delivery of short, simple messages or tools.	Is the content valued and does it address a genuine need?

Here are some digital and online multimedia tools and channels to consider using in your communications.

FORMAT	USES, BENEFITS AND CONSIDERATIONS
Video	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/Xpbtcl</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for showing at meetings and events, and provides a legacy for the project. • Brings life to ideas and concepts and an engaging way of telling a story and sharing the perspective of staff/patients. • Combinations of film locations – as opposed to a ‘talking head’ – generally more engaging. • Increasingly produced by amateurs - can be expensive if involving a film production company – around £1,500 for ‘talking head’, up to maybe £4,000 if location filming (eg in a hospital) is included. • You can create very short (6 seconds) video clips using Vine (a free app) – they have a ‘homemade’ feel to them (see http://bit.ly/16lN2Sd) and provide a visual snapshot. • People are increasingly used to watching video online, especially with rise of mobile and tablet use. Upload films to YouTube which increases visibility of content in Google searches.
Audio slideshow	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/V9JiLB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick-win content, especially if a presentation has already been prepared for offline use (eg at a conference). • Cheap to produce (around £300) and fairly quick to turn around. • Can help to explain and illustrate ideas at the same time (through voice and visual). • Slideshows can also be uploaded to Slideshare (open source software) which increases visibility of content.
Audio clip	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/XncQqx</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap to produce (around £300) and quick to turnaround. • Shouldn't be too long (max 5 mins) unless it's very engaging. • You can create free audio clips using the Audioboo app (on all platforms, www.audioboom.com).

FORMAT	USES, BENEFITS AND CONSIDERATIONS
Animation	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/YokiEB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be creative with visual to convey complex ideas, especially when you're doing lots of referring to and interpreting of figures. • Expensive and resource-intensive to produce. Around £7,000 and upwards.
Infographic	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/Vlk6pc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual way of communicating data rather than simple chart or written copy – great for illustrating what data means, quickly. • Can be flat infographics (eg http://bit.ly/Vlk6pc which are available as sets to download and use) or interactive (eg http://bit.ly/TKg6r0). • Good for sharing on social media, especially Facebook where image-led updates get highest levels of engagement. • Costs would be around £300 for non-interactive but increase significantly for interactive.
Prezi	<p>Example: http://bit.ly/13m51Fd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive presentations. • Good for presenting content that is detailed and joins up in various ways – plays in a linear way but you can explore however you like. • Can simply be a more engaging way to do a presentation compared to PowerPoint. • Can embed videos, links etc which you can't do in an audio slideshow.

Appendix F - Local Leadership Framework Councillor Profile.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-leadership-framework-councillors#your-councillor-profile>

Appendix G - SLCC Community Engagement App

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/community-engagement-app/>

Appendix H - Christmas Light Switch On Web Results.

This Appendix shows the results of googling for “Kidlington Christmas light switch on” on the day of the 2023 event. Figure 21 shows that the most prominent results gave information about previous years’ events, which had different timings to 2023’s. The 10th result (Figure 22) was the first to give details of 2023’s switch on from a KPC source. Figure 23 shows the News Flashes section of the KPC home page – this was the only part of the page to mention the event.

Note that the Google result did not link directly to the switch on news flash page but rather to the home page that happened to be displaying the text. The reason the switch on page was not in the Google results is that it did not have any text that Google could use for indexing. However, a screenshot of this cannot be included in this report as none was taken at the time and the Christmas Lights Switch On page has since been deleted – the content at the page’s address as of 24/12/23 is shown in Figure 24. When viewed on November 30th, the page simply included an image, which appeared to be a scan of a poster about the event. Right clicking on this image and choosing Inspect shows the website code for the image. This is shown in Figure 25, and shows that no alternative text was provided for the image, so it was not readable by screen readers. These are used, for example, by people with visual impairments, who may otherwise be unable to receive the content in the image. Alternative text (also known as alt text) is required by the first guideline listed in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), 2008): “**1.1.1 Non-text Content:** All non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose...”.

Google search results for "kidlington christmas lights switch on". The search bar shows the query and navigation icons. Below the search bar are tabs for Images, Videos, Times, News, Maps, Books, Flights, and Finance. The results show "About 178,000 results (0.28 seconds)".

30 November @ 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

The fun begins at 5pm with the lights are usually switchen on at 6pm. Enjoy a festive atmosphere with fairground rides, stalls, live entertainment and performances from local children's groups.

Red Kite Days
<https://oxfordshire.redkitedays.co.uk> > Events

Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch On 2023 - Red Kite Days

About featured snippets • Feedback

People also ask

- What time is Kidlington light switch on?
- What time is the Christmas light switch on Northampton?
- What time is Southend Christmas lights switch on?
- What is the Christmas light switch in Manchester?

Feedback

The Oxford Magazine
<https://theoxfordmagazine.com> > event > kidlington-c...

Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch-on 2023

The **Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch-on 2023** event will take place on 30 November and hundreds are expected to turn out for the event.

Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com> > ... > Other Event

Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch On

The **Lights** will be switched on at 6.30pm. There will be: Local **Christmas Stalls Funfair Rides** Santa's grotto. Hot food & ...

Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com> > the-kidlington-centre > k...

Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch On

At the **Kidlington Lights Switch On** this year, The **Kidlington** will have Santa, some of his Reindeer and the Sleigh. There...

The Oxford Magazine
<https://theoxfordmagazine.com> > christmas-lights-swit...

All the 2023 Christmas lights switch-on events in Oxfordshire

Figure 21 – The first Google results included information for previous years' events.

Kidlington Parish Council
<http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk> > HOME_20041

Kidlington Parish Council: Home

Kidlington Christmas Lights Switch on ... Thursday 30 November Fun Begins at 5pm
 SWITCH ON AT 6PM Read More... Football in Kidlington this Saturday Pitching In ...

Figure 22 - 10th Google result, for KPC home page.



Figure 23 - Area of the home page that mentioned the switch on.



Figure 24 - Christmas Lights Switch On page was removed between November 30th and December 24th, 2023.

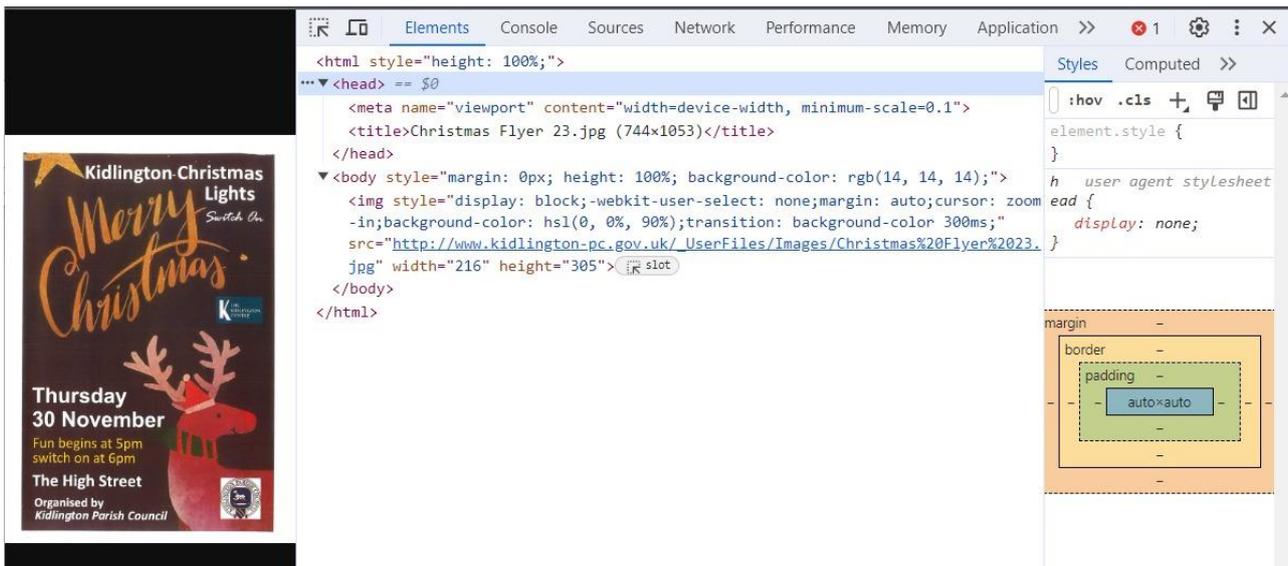
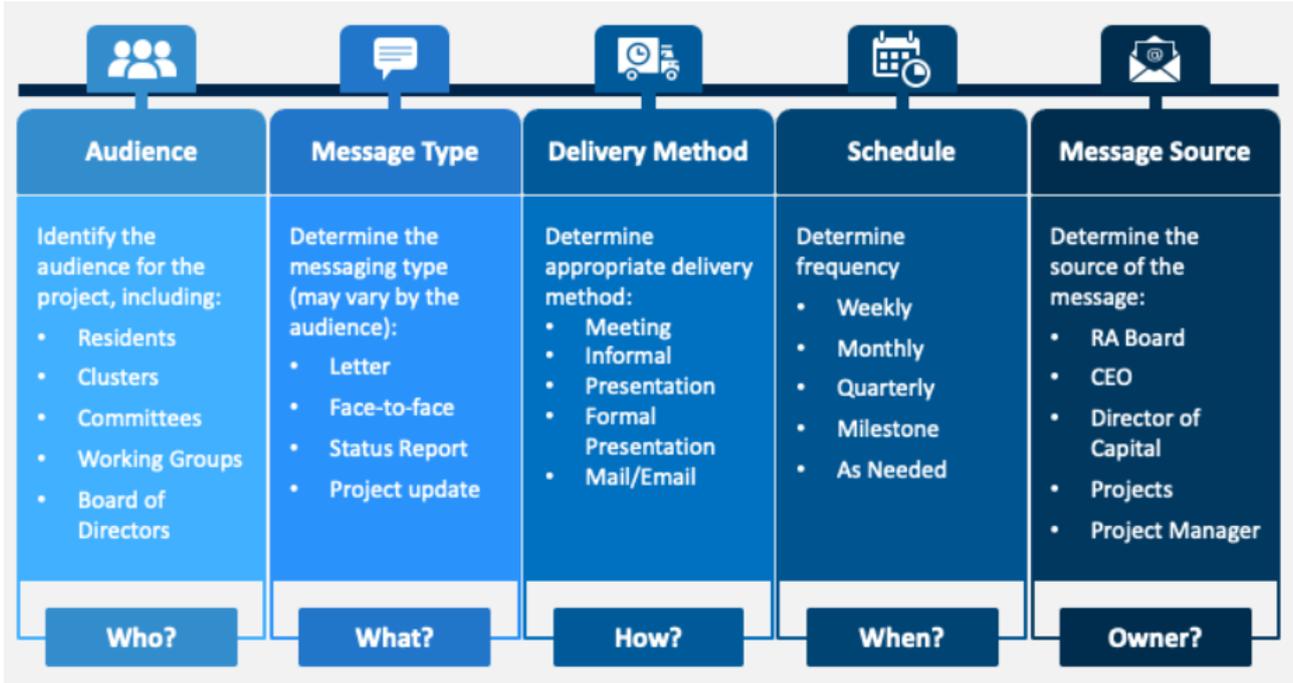


Figure 25 - Poster image does not include alternative text for screen readers.

Appendix I - Basic Communications Plan process examples.



Priority-1¶

Stakeholder Group¶	Why¶	What¶ (Key messages)¶	How¶ (Channel)¶	When¶	Who¶
¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶