



# Communications and Marketing Strategy 2019/23

Adopted November  
2019  
Minute PR912

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# INTRODUCTION



This strategy is designed to guide the town council's communications and marketing activities over the coming months & years.

Communications activity is a key driver in public perception of overall council performance. Research shows that keeping residents informed, listening to their concerns and involving them when making decisions has a significant impact on their satisfaction with the council and its services.

Marketing techniques are an integral part of a forward-looking communications strategy. If it is to be meaningful and have some longevity, the communications and marketing strategy must reflect the corporate aims and priorities of the council. It will also reflect the principles set out in the Equalities Policy, Information and Data Protection Policy and Customer Services Policy as well as being a vehicle for the delivery of other council policies.



# COMMUNICATION



## 2.1 WHY IS COMMUNICATION SO IMPORTANT?

Local government communications have, over the past few years, increasingly focused on reputation. Better communications lead to recognition and respect – reputation does matter. Many councils fail to effectively communicate who they are and what they do – and the fewer people know about an organisation, the less likely they are to rate it highly.

Achieving the council's aims and objectives requires good communication with every individual, group and organisation we work with or provide services for.

An important part of any organisation's role is to ensure that information provided both by and to, is easily accessible, relevant and timely. The council has to recognise the importance of communication and be committed to developing its own services to meet the expectations of the community it serves.

The advances made in information technology offer exciting new ways of communicating. At the same time, for many people, traditional methods – newspapers, telephone, leaflets – still play a fundamental role that must not be undervalued.

## 2.2 STAKEHOLDERS/KEY AUDIENCES

The stakeholders/key audiences of Hedge End Town Council are:

- Residents
- Council members
- Partners within the public sector (Eastleigh Borough Council, West End Parish, Botley Parish, Police, etc)
- Business community
- Voluntary/community organisations and groups
- Schools
- Press/media -(mainly Daily Echo, Solent Radio, Hedge End & Botley Facebook group)
- Town council employees



# OUR NARRATIVE



## 3.1 OUR NARRATIVE AND KEY MESSAGE

The growth Hedge End has undergone in recent decades has helped shape what was once known as a small village into a thriving community. However residents still very much look to retain many of the characteristics which small villages hold dear. Such as supporting local and each other, **community spirit, goodwill, honesty, transparency, and communication**. These all help build into a narrative which we should be looking to portray through the message Hedge End Town Council send out to its constituents. The key message has always been to 'Serve the community' showing that as a council we strive to use the characteristics mentioned above, to support decisions and actions which best reflect our key message.

If the council is to build a strong reputation, effectively inform residents, engage and improve customer satisfaction then these drivers must form the basis of its communications strategy.

There is also a need for proactive and reactive information:

**Proactively** – Telling people information to influence and change attitudes

**Reactively** – Giving residents information they want to know

## 3.2 PRINCIPLES

The following principles will be adopted in all communications:

- **Integrity and honesty**
- **Clarity**
- **Openness and accessibility**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Listening and responding**
- **Accountability**
- **Consistency**
- **Accuracy**

# KEY PRIORITIES



## 4.1 KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR WILL BE:

- Continuous development of the town councils website
- Increasing the Town Council's online presence through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts
- Develop communication with the community & residents of Hedge End
- Marketing the town councils halls to increase occupancy
- Honouring the history of Hedge End & Memorial Days
- Promoting initiatives supported by the council
- Improve and enhance our reputation and build trust
- Supporting events for the town such as the Remembrance parade, The Carnival, Fireworks Fiesta, and Christmas Lights
- Working with Eastleigh Borough Council to boost local events across sport, tourism, entertainment
- Supporting initiatives to increase the attractiveness of the town centre.

## 4.2 KEY DATES IN THE YEAR

A calendar of the key dates in the year is attached at Annex 1.



# Calendar Key Dates

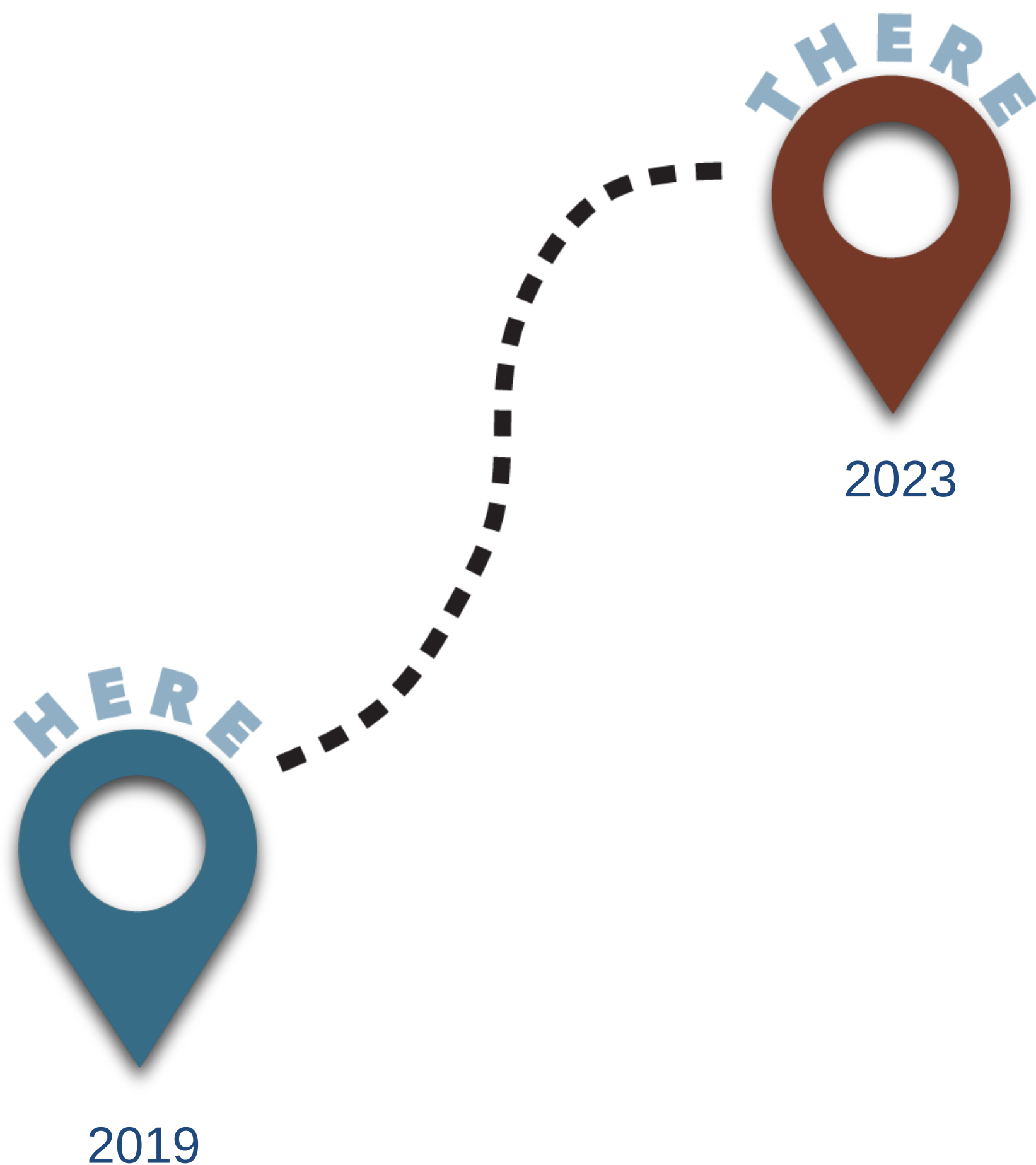
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Year</li> <li>• Burns night</li> <li>• Dry January</li> <li>• RSPB's Big Garden Watch.</li> <li>• National Storytelling Week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valentine's Day</li> <li>• Eastleigh Sports Awards</li> <li>• Random Acts of Kindness Day 17<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• LGBT History Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring Edition of the Gazette Release</li> <li>• Eastleigh 10k 24<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• Mother's Day (UK) 31<sup>st</sup> March</li> <li>• World Book Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queen's Birthday</li> <li>• Easter</li> <li>• Annual Parish Assembly</li> <li>• Serving the Community Awards/ Youth Awards/Allotment Awards</li> <li>• World Autism Awareness Week April 1 – 7<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Volunteer Recognition Day 20<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• Stress Awareness Month 1<sup>st</sup> April</li> </ul>
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGM- Annual General Meeting</li> <li>• VE Day War Memorial Day</li> <li>• Dunkirk War Memorial Day</li> <li>• Mayor Making</li> <li>• Great British Spring Clean- 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 23<sup>rd</sup> April,</li> <li>• St Georges Day</li> <li>• Walk to Work Day 5<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• Easter</li> <li>• Local and Community awareness month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D-Day Landings</li> <li>• Trooping the Colour</li> <li>• Armed Forces Day</li> <li>• Summer Edition of the Gazette Release</li> <li>• Volunteers week</li> <li>• Eastleigh Unwrapped - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June.</li> <li>• Growfest - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Royal Victoria Country Park.</li> <li>• Fair Oak Carnival - Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June</li> <li>• WEST END CARNIVAL 15<sup>th</sup> June</li> <li>• Father's Day</li> <li>• Recycle awareness week 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> July Hedge End Carnival</li> <li>• Green Flag awards</li> <li>• Eastleigh Mela - Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July</li> <li>• The Eastleigh Chilli Fiesta - Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July,</li> <li>• Park Sport 29<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bursledon Regatta</li> <li>• Beyond the Stage Summer School - Monday 5<sup>th</sup> to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August, The Berry Theatre.</li> <li>• Cycle to Work day August 15<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merchant Navy Day</li> <li>• Autumn Edition of Gazette Release</li> <li>• Communities week</li> <li>• Pride in Eastleigh – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• Bishopstoke Carnival - Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> &amp; Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• D-Day/World War 2 Anniversary Event – Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September,</li> <li>• Eastleigh Film Festival – Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September,</li> <li>• British Wildlife Photography Awards</li> <li>• A celebration of British Wildlife -14<sup>th</sup> September 10:00 AM</li> <li>• World Suicide Prevention Day September 10<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Autumn Edition of the Gazette Release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stoptober (stop smoking campaign.</li> <li>• Black History Month</li> <li>• Mental Health awareness week</li> <li>• National Hate Crime Awareness Week 12<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Our Spooky Halloween Trail</li> <li>• 26<sup>th</sup> October 10:00 AM – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 3:00 PM Itchen Valley Country Park</li> <li>• Countess Mountbatten Charity Paws Spooktacular 27<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Itchen Valley Country Park</li> <li>• Netley pumpkin festival</li> <li>• Step up for you- campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> November Remembrance Parade</li> <li>• 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary-125 years of HETC</li> <li>• Fireworks Fiesta</li> <li>• Christmas Lights Hedge End.</li> <li>• Christmas Light Switch-On - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November- Eastleigh</li> <li>• Kindness Day (UK) 13<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• The Ageas Bowl's annual Fireworks Party is back on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November</li> <li>• Tree Charter day 30<sup>th</sup> November</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas Holidays</li> <li>• Festive Trail- Itchen Country Park 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 10:00 AM – 5<sup>th</sup> Jan -Itchen Valley Country Park</li> <li>• 05/12/19 International volunteers' day</li> <li>• Winter Edition of the Gazette Release</li> </ul>

# OBJECTIVES



The objectives of the Town Councils Communications for the forthcoming years are to:

1. Build Hedge End Town Councils reputation as an innovative local authority through communication and engaging more effectively with our audience
2. Build Hedge End Town Councils reputation as an authority that has low tax, open spaces, accessible facilities, efficient services and offers real value for money.
3. Drive-up trust ratings, leading to greater resident and stakeholder advocacy
4. Support elected members in their role as community leaders and senior management to drive the agenda of the council through corporate planning and performance management, insight and analysis, transformational programmes and policy development.





# STRATEGIC APPROACH



Our strategic approach should rest on these four pillars:

- **OPPORTUNITY:** At all times, ensuring we are developing promotion for council owned assets and funded initiatives. We will place a relentless focus upon highlighting these to our key audience.
- **VISIBILITY:** This will be achieved through continues branding in our communication, and reflect the councils' key messages to 'Serve the Community'.
- **ENGAGING:** The lack of prior engagement means there is constant room for improvement to ensure better communication with our audience. This should be through a blend of targeted engagement followed up by regular communications to build trust.
- **INNOVATION:** We will focus on ways in which to best connect & deliver our message. Changing behaviour with evidence-based campaigns. Also by innovating, identifying and implementing new revenue schemes such as advertising.

*" While the public will always choose cutting expenditure on communications over spending on services, communications matter as much as ever. We still find those who feel their council keeps them well informed are markedly more satisfied than those who do not. Those who feel well informed about details of services provided are much more likely to think they are getting value for money than those who do not."*

***-Local Government Association***

# CHANNEL MANAGEMENT



## 7.1 Website

The website is a crucial way in which the council can publish information to its audience. Since the appointment of a marketing officer, changes to the website have been an ongoing process to create a website which can be navigated more clearly, thus helping with the bounce rate and impressions (measure effectiveness of the page). The community news section has helped showcase the council's involvement in important community and national events, showing interest which we can share publicly. This should remain an aspect of the website which is continuously kept up to date. Assuring everything on the website has its place in a logical order, will help inform & guide traffic so information is easily accessed. This, in turn, should help lessen manpower hours answering enquiries. The 1&1 platform which the website was founded in early 1995, does suffer from being very outdated. This limits the website to new technology and issues such as:

- Mobile, tablet-friendly viewing
- Enabling newsletter sign up access/ email capture
- Potentially using the website for user-friendly booking of Community Halls/events in the near future.
- Adding the online digital interactive magazine platform Issuu
- Creating a modern, visual and dynamic website which is easy to navigate
- At higher risk of being hacked by a virus or individual.
- Compliance with regulations for Public Sector Bodies Accessibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, helping those with disabilities.

Further investigation into website builders & providers should be explored if the website is to be developed. These issues will need to be addressed in the coming years ahead if Hedge End Town Council is going to grow with its constituents. The website should be our official go-to platform for push only information which can then be shared across all other sites. Moving forward, quarterly will be an analysis of website statistics to monitor and build on the prior improvements made.

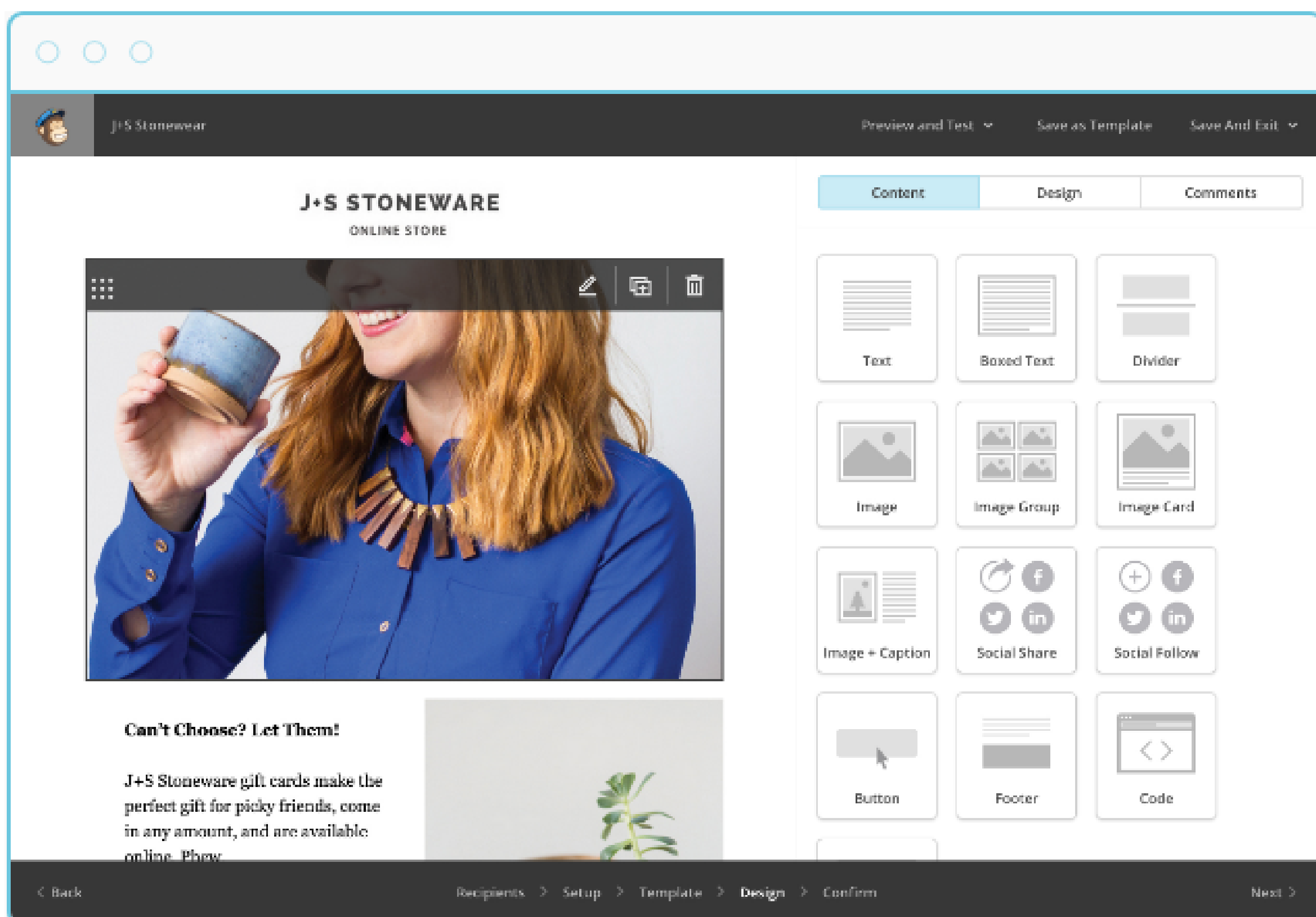


## 7.2 Digital Newsletter/ Email Notification

Development of the website will allow for email capture, where information can be delivered by monthly newsletters. This overtime will reduce paper and instantly provide information to email addresses inline with GDPR guidelines which came into implementation on the 25th May 2018. The General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individual citizens of the European Union and the European Economic Area. It also addresses the transfer of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas. In principle, those not wishing to receive printed Gazette's can also read online through email notification.

There are multiple free online solutions the most widely known being Mail Chimp.

**Mail Chimp-** One of many free digital online platforms for newsletters



### This Platform Offers

- Free newsletter design for basic templates
- Option to send upwards of 10k emails a month
- Security for stored contacts
- Contact list of up to 2k
- Analytics of completed campaigns





### 7.3 Social Media

Since the start of January 2019 social media has been updated daily, instead of once a week. This, in turn, has seen significant growth in followers, especially Facebook.

With a variety of social media platforms available to choose from, it is important as a council we focus on key sites which will be most beneficial to reaching our audience. This means our accounts are limited to Facebook, Twitter and our newly established LinkedIn page. The main focus being Facebook, which remains our fastest growing platform by far.

Total Page followers as of today: 2,270



Communicating in real-time is becoming ever more important as much of what we do becomes instant or less time dependant. Addressing real-times messages allows us to relay a message of care and concern for issues immediately, helping build trust and respect with our followers.

Whilst being open to communication is positive, we do need to consider damaging or negative comments. This can be met with quick responses, taking into account the principles mentioned in 3.2 of Our Narrative.

Facebook sites such as the *Hedge End & Botley* page are equally important to keep up to date with community matters, along with the newly formed *Hedge End Cops* group. Involvement in these groups should be met with caution when using personal profiles which reflect on the council. Councillors engaging in social media should make it clear that they do so in a personal capacity, and not on behalf of Hedge End Town Council.

Investment in Facebook Ads will help boost the profile of events and campaigns by driving more online traffic to specific posts. This should be considered as a form of advertising by the council relevant to the years ahead should budgets permit. Projects such as the Serving the Community awards would benefit from having further outreach to drive applications (example). Facebook boosts are approximately in the range of £50-£100.



#### 7.4 Print

The Hedge End Gazette has been a beacon of community news since the very first issue released in the early 1990s. The development of print and technology means we can offer the residents of Hedge End high-quality print & design, full of community & council news.

Raising the standards of design should enable the gazette to start financially paying toward the print and distribution of the magazine. This has been introduced through advertising offering local businesses the chance to promote their products or services. Development of advertising over 2020 will be key, building good relationships with local businesses to ensure future business, as well as carrying a good reputation through word of mouth.

Hedge End Official Street Plan- The expansion of Hedge End over recent years means an updated street map is beneficial to the community and those visiting the village. Moving forward this form of communication should remain a continued source of information until we can reach a point where it can become completely digital. Print remains a respected and trusted source for which is available to all residents of any age. (Third party provider)

Through collaboration with Eastleigh Borough Council leaflets will allow for key areas of public services such as transport, waste, health care etc to relay important advice to residents who seek it. This is provided by a third party and not Hedge End Town Council, however still relevant to providing key information.

Building awareness of services in Hedge End again will help aid trust. Utilising our local notice boards to showcase important print material is a low cost, a valuable asset in the community. These boards should be reserved to council & local groups and private ads will be removed as well as regularly maintained.

If the council maintains regular quality control checks over print design, noticeboards and any other forms of print & promotion which carries the Hedge End logo, then this should help raise engagement with targeted audiences.

*" Globally those under 35 are far more likely to trust digital platforms than people over 50, while baby boomers are more likely to rate trust in TV/radio more positively than millennials. However, when it comes to trust in print media (newspapers/magazines) trust is consistent across all ages".- 3 January 2019 Ipsos MORI*



# Evaluation

The core focus for Hedge End Town Council needs to be improving communication first and foremost.

By implementing our key message through a strategic approach we should be able to apply the essentials required to build trust, accessibility and clarity among other principles.

This all starts with the website as our main platform to provide information. The website should be for push information only which can then be shared across all other sites. By rebuilding the website in a user friendly manner, which allows better communication and the option to care for our assets such as community halls and allotments through online booking systems. We should be able to maximise accessibility and financial profit, whilst making clear 'what we do and why'. Improvements such as this should, in turn, lead to building better trust ratings, because the more information which is easily & readily available, the more time office staff can spend responding to important enquiries and actioning the council's strategies and agendas.

Thus, in turn, all other platforms can be built upon, if we have a good website we can lay the foundations in which to refer back to across all areas of the Hedge End Town Council.

Budget dependant, promotion of events and council initiatives will be a positive investment, for areas such as the 'Serving the Community award' which lacks attention and community engagement. Boosting these events may help draw the necessary attention required to make them more successful in the future.

