

# **Silverstone Parish Council Communication Strategy**

## **1. Summary**

Silverstone Parish Council (SPC) serves a vibrant community of approximately 2,500 residents and is host to one of the most prestigious and popular motorsport events, namely F1. To enhance resident engagement and communication, a more inclusive and effective strategy is needed. While the community magazine, News & Views (N&V), has been valuable, there are opportunities to improve its timeliness and reach. By developing a new omni-media communication approach, SPC can better serve all residents, strengthen community ties, and make optimal use of resources. This strategy includes stopping SPC's funding for N&V and reallocating funding from N&V to SPC's own communication media, fostering sustainability and enhancing transparency.

## **2. Current Communication Landscape**

### **Community Magazine (N&V):**

- **Strengths:**
  - Established presence with diverse local content (gardening, cooking, local sport, readers views and letters, adverts, village history, church and local clubs' activities).
  - Supported by paid advertisements.
  - N&V's editorial team frequently asserts that the magazine enjoys strong popularity, with a substantial and loyal readership. To sustain itself without SPC's funding, N&V has several options for various revenue streams, such as introducing paid subscriptions (£0.65 per issue), crowdfunding, securing sponsorship from local businesses, forming a charitable entity to access grants, increasing the volume and pricing of advertisements, or transitioning to a fully online format to minimise costs. A combination of these approaches could also be explored to ensure its continued operation.
- **Weaknesses:**
  - SPC and N&V have consistently faced challenges in aligning their requirements. The current form of arrangements does not comply with local government rules and guidelines for governance and procurement and does not support community cohesion. NOTE: Please refer to communication leads paper on the outcome of dialogue between SPC and N&V which was submitted on 12/08/24 for further insights.
  - Limited demographic reach and a bi-monthly schedule may result in outdated content.
  - Reduces the council's capacity for direct conversations with residents.
  - Past two decades trends indicate a move away from printed news to immediate, digital access through various media.

## Website:

- **Strengths:**
  - Comprehensive information hub; Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliant.
  - Centralised access to council documents and news.
- **Weaknesses:**
  - Outdated design and complex navigation hinder user experience.
  - Limited interactive features and infrequent updates.
  - Lack of management information and usage.

## Facebook Page:

- **Strengths:**
  - Facilitates direct communication with residents.
  - Offers timely updates and visual content.
- **Weaknesses:**
  - Limited followers (~280) compared to the village Facebook group (~2k).
  - Lack of content variety and inconsistent branding reduces engagement. Note: we are still developing and learning how best to write and engage with the community in this format. Larger councils require investment in resources to manage this.

**Overall Challenges:** Difficulty engaging all demographic groups, reliance on print, and inadequate direct community conversations and interactions.

## 3. Communication Goals

1. **Inclusivity:** Engage diverse demographic groups, including youth and young families, through varied platforms.
2. **Transparency:** Improve communication about council services, achievements, and activities.
3. **Sustainability:** Reduce paper reliance and adopt eco-friendly practices.
4. **Omni-Media Approach:** Utilise multiple platforms, including weatherproof posters and noticeboards.
5. **Enhanced Engagement:** Foster community interaction and gather feedback via annual reports and surveys.

## 4. Strategic Approach

### 4.1. Switch Funding from N&V to SPC's Own Communications Strategy

- **Rationale:** Redirect funds from N&V to enhance council-owned channels, focusing on public services and achievements distinct from N&V's content. This approach will avoid direct competition and ensure unique, council-centric communication.
- **Action:** Reallocate approximately 6% of council income currently used for N&V to support new communication channels and discontinue funding N&V from the end of the current financial year. The first year's costs are mostly related to build and repair; therefore, these costs drop significantly in subsequent years as shown in section 6.
- **Outcome:** Improved engagement reduced on-going costs and optimised resource use.

#### 4.2. Website Revamp (One-Off)

- **Objective:** Modernise the website for better user experience and engagement.
- **Actions:**
  - **Redesign:** Implement a responsive, mobile-friendly design.
  - **Navigation Improvement:** Simplify menus and improve usability.
  - **Content Management System (CMS):** Update CMS for easy content updates.
  - **Interactive Features:** Add forms, forums, and live streams.
  - **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO):** Include local SEO with an estimated cost of £500.
  - **Integration:** Link with social media feeds for consistent content distribution.
  - **Security:** Enhance security through encryption and regular security updates to protect user data, prevent downtimes and maintain a safe browsing experience.
- **Benefits:** Enhanced user experience and engagement. Note: Irrespective of this communication strategy, SPC had planned to do this a few years ago.
- **Estimated Cost:** £3,000 (One-Off) + £500 for SEO (One-Off).

#### 4.3. Enhance Social Media Presence (One-Off)

- **Objective:** Broaden social media reach with varied content and engagement strategies.
- **Actions:**
  - **Platform Expansion:** Focus on Facebook and Instagram. Note: both platforms are owned by Meta and when we post to Facebook, the same post can appear in Instagram automatically and no repetition in efforts.
  - **Content Diversification:** Use polls, Q&A sessions, and visual content.
  - **Brand Consistency:** Standardise visual branding across all posts.
  - **Ambassador Programme:** Involve youth, young family and active community members as ambassadors.
- **Benefits:** Broader demographic reach and higher engagement.
- **Estimated Cost:** £100 (One-Off).

#### 4.4. Introduce an Annual Newsletter (Recurring)

- **Objective:** Provide an annual update on council activities, focusing on transparency and community cohesion.

- **Actions:**
  - **Format:** A4 or A5, full-colour, available both online and in print.
  - **Content:** Focus on last 12 months and highlight council successes, events, councillor profiles and local charities and community groups. There should be no adverts.
  - **Distribution:** Aligned close with Annual village meeting. Delivered online and prints made available at local venues. Note: If a legislative requirement, then SPC can deliver them to each house with F1 car passes and booklet.
- **Benefits:** Increased transparency and resident information.
- **Estimated Cost:** £400 (Annually).

#### 4.5. *Weatherproof Noticeboards and Posters (One-Off)*

- **Objective:** Increase visibility of council communications and drive traffic to the website by placing weatherproof noticeboards and posters in key locations around the village.
- **Actions:**
  - **New Noticeboard in Leys Development:** Install a weatherproof noticeboard in the Leys development to replicate the central village noticeboard, fostering a sense of inclusion and engagement with the wider community.
  - **Poster Placement:** Distribute posters promoting the website and key council updates in high-traffic areas, such as parks, bus stops, school gates and community venues.
  - **Content Focus:** Highlight SPC's main services, main event dates and direct residents to the council website for more information.
- **Benefits:** Enhances visibility and accessibility of council information, promotes website traffic, and strengthens community cohesion.
- **Estimated Cost:** Approx. £250 (One-Off).

#### 4.6. *Subscription Email Service (Recurring)*

- **Objective:** Regularly update residents via direct emails.
- **Actions:**
  - **Setup:** Implement an email subscription platform.
  - **Content:** Monthly updates on council meetings, events, and announcements.
  - **Promotion:** Encourage subscriptions through website and social media.
- **Benefits:** Direct and timely communication.
- **Estimated Cost:** £500 (Initially £500 as it includes initial development and integration, but this cost will drop in subsequent years as we will only pay for an email marketing subscription).

### 5. Resource Management

#### 5.1. *Increase Clerk's Time (Recurring)*

- **Objective:** Ensure adequate time for managing the new communication strategy.
- **Actions:**
  - **Time Allocation:** Similar to time currently allocated to other comms and N&V accounting for social media and web management.
  - **Newsletter Management:** Adjust time based on the project's needs.
- **Benefits:** Consistent communication management.
- **Estimated Cost:** N/A as will be absorbed in the current schedule of work.

## 6. Budget Outline for Year One (Estimated)

The figures below are estimated based on desk research. Once the strategy is approved, we will adopt procurement based on SPC's financial regulations rules.

| Item                        | Estimated Cost | Frequency | Notes                                     |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------|---|
| Website Revamp              | £3,000         | One-Off   | Includes design and functionality updates |
| SEO Optimisation            | £500           | One-Off   | Improve website discoverability           |
| Social Media Expansion      | £100           | One-Off   | Branding, content diversification         |
| Annual Newsletter           | £400           | Annually  | Production and distribution costs         |
| Subscription Email Service  | £500           | Annually  | Setup and ongoing updates                 |
| Noticeboard and posters     | £250           | One-Off   | Purchase and installation                 |
| <b>Total Estimated Cost</b> | <b>£4,750</b>  |           |   |
| <b>Contingency (20%)</b>    | <b>£950</b>    |           | Cover unforeseen expenses                 |

|                    |               |  |  |
|--------------------|---------------|--|--|
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>£5,700</b> |  |  |
|--------------------|---------------|--|--|

## 7. Action Plan and Detailed Content Calendar

### Action Plan Table

| Phase   | Action  | Timeline | Responsibility  | Cost             |
|---------|---|----------|---|------------------|
| Phase 1 | Switch funding from N&V and discontinue funding N&V from the end of this financial year | Sept 24  | Council Decision  | N/A              |
|         | Website redesign initiation   | Dec 24   | Web Developer, Clerk, communication leads (Comms leads) | £3,000 (One-Off) |
|         | Recruit social media ambassadors  | Jan 25   | Clerk, comms leads                                      | N/A              |
|         | Implement additional noticeboard and posters  | March 25 | Clerk   | £250             |
| Phase 2 | Launch revamped website   | May 25   | Web Developer, Clerk, Comms leads                       | N/A              |
|         | Expand social media presence  | Dec 24   | Clerk, Ambassadors                                      | £500 (Annually)  |
| Phase 3 | Begin email subscription updates  | May 25   | Clerk   | £500 (Annually)  |

|         |                                 |        |                                 |                 |
|---------|---------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
|         | Monitor and adjust engagement   | Jul 25 | Clerk                           | N/A             |
| Phase 4 | Produce annual newsletter       | May 25 | Clerk, Chairman and Councillors | £400 (Annually) |
|         | Evaluate strategy effectiveness | Oct 25 | Council, Clerk                  | N/A             |

Note: Project will be managed by SPC Clerk and governed by Comms leads to ensure Clerk has necessary support. Comms leads will report to the council on project progress and any deviations from the plan or budget.

### Detailed Content Calendar

To enhance our website and social media presence, SPC should create a balanced mix of evergreen and topical content. Evergreen content will ensure our key messages about council services are always accessible and relevant, such as signposting to important services and resources, highlighting what the council does, and providing consistent updates on ongoing initiatives and consultations. This type of content will help demystify the SPC's work and keep the community informed in a consistent and accessible way.

Topical content will keep our communication fresh and engaging by focusing on current news, events, and urgent updates. SPC should spotlight local activities, share community photos, and highlight good news stories and volunteers work and efforts in the village that resonate with residents. By encouraging participation and sharing content from other relevant profiles, we can boost community engagement and make our platforms more interactive and reflective of our residents' interests and needs. Balancing these content types will help us sustain interest and connect with the community effectively.

Councillors and committee chairpersons will play a crucial role in contributing content for the website, social media, annual newsletter and email subscription. Comms leads will be there to support councillors with review and making them ready to publish.

**Note:** The content calendar is an example and requires further development with communication leads and the clerk.

| Month | Key Actions | Social Media Themes | Website Updates | Email Focus |
|-------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|
|-------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|

|           |  |                       |                                  |  |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| January   | Launch website redesign  | Introduce the project | Design updates                   | Website launch dates announcement          |
| February  | Recruit youth and young family ambassadors                       | Meet the Ambassadors  | Highlight ambassadors            | Volunteer opportunities                    |
| March     | Promote Annual April Village Council Meeting                     | Community Spotlight   | Events calendar update           | Approval of budget for the following year  |
| April     | Village Council Meeting  | Spring Activities     | Event highlights                 | Village Council Meeting                    |
| May       | Communicate outcome of Annual Village Council Meeting            | Summer Planning Tips  | School and council updates       | MotoGP event details and road restrictions |
| June      | Inform residents about F1 arrangements and car pass distribution | Community Polls       | Traffic and restrictions updates | Information on car passes                  |
| July      | F1 event updates   | Behind the Scenes     | Event and traffic management     | Weekend restrictions for F1 racing         |
| August    | Survey residents for feedback                                    | Resident Feedback     | Update survey results            | Request for resident feedback              |
| September | Promote end-of-summer council activities                         | Seasonal Activities   | Autumn planning                  | Back-to-school tips                        |
| October   | Highlight Halloween and Guy Fawkes events                        | Community Safety      | Halloween and Fireworks updates  | Safety tips for events                     |



|          |                              |                     |                     |                        |
|----------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| November | Plan for end-of-year review  | Year in Review      | Annual achievements | Highlighting successes |
| December | Review and adjust strategies | Community Thank You | Future plans        | End-of-year update     |

## 8. Evaluation and Monitoring

- **Quarterly Reviews:** Assess communication performance and adjust strategies as needed.
- **Resident Surveys:** Conduct annual surveys to gather feedback and ensure that communication efforts are meeting resident needs.

## 9. Adopt a unified Tone of Voice

- **Inclusive:** Use welcoming, jargon-free language suitable for all demographics.
- **Informative:** Focus on clear and concise communication.
- **Positive:** Highlight council achievements, services, and community successes.
- **Transparent:** Be open and honest in all communications, especially regarding decisions and initiatives.
- **Engaging:** Use visuals, videos, and an informal tone to connect with residents, especially on social media.

## 10. Conclusion

By implementing an omni-media communication strategy, SPC will modernise its approach to resident engagement, ensuring broader reach and more timely communication. Switching funding from N&V to the SPC's channels will foster a stronger connection with residents, making the council's services more transparent, accessible and inclusive.

## 11. Recommendations for Approval

- Stop and reallocate N&V funding to support SPC's own omni-media communication strategy.
- Invest in website redesign, security and SEO optimisation.
- Enhance social media presence with engaging, informal content.
- Introduce an annual newsletter distinct from N&V.
- Weatherproof noticeboard and posters.
- Launch an email subscription service for regular updates.
- Resource the above initiatives by increasing Clerk's time.

## 12. Key Takeaways

- **Inclusivity:** Broader engagement across all demographic groups.
- **Transparency:** Clear and accessible communication with the community.
- **Efficiency:** Optimised communication efforts to meet residents' needs.
- **Sustainability:** Emphasis on environmentally friendly practices.
- **Engagement:** Increased community participation through diverse communication channels.

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