

Yateley Town Council

Communications and Community Engagement Strategy



1. INTRODUCTION

This strategy outlines the communications and community engagement approach for Yateley Town Council (YTC), ensuring compliance with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and integrating the objectives and methods detailed in the Communications Plan 2024-2025. The aim is to improve communication between the YTC and the residents of Yateley to increase awareness of local issues and council involvement, encourage public participation, and receive feedback.

2. OBJECTIVES

- **Inform and Engage:** To keep residents informed about local news, events, and council activities.
- **Promote Council Services:** To highlight the services offered by YTC, including facilities for hire and community initiatives.
- **Enhance Community Relations:** To foster positive relationships with local organisations, schools, and community groups.
- **Ensure Accessibility:** To make information accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities.
- **Build Trust and Confidence:** To establish strong two-way connections with the community, encouraging engagement and feedback.

3. PRINCIPLES

In accordance with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, all communications will:

- **Be Lawful:** Ensure compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.
- **Be Cost-Effective:** Utilise resources efficiently to maximize reach and impact.
- **Be Objective:** Provide balanced and factual information.
- **Be Even-Handed:** Treat all stakeholders fairly and impartially.
- **Be Appropriate:** Tailor communications to suit the context and audience.
- **Promote Equality and Diversity:** Reflect the diverse community of Yateley.
- **Exercise Care During Sensitive Periods:** Take special care during pre-election periods and other times of heightened sensitivity.

4. COMMUNICATION METHODS

Social Media

- **Platforms:** For example we may use: Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, Threads, Google Business, Bluesky, WhatsApp.
- **Frequency:** Daily posts, with increased activity on weekends.
- **Content:** Promote YTC services, events, and news, local events, green spaces, and community initiatives. Ensure inclusivity by acknowledging major religious holidays, LGBT+ Pride, Disability Pride, etc.
- **Engagement:** Respond professionally to comments, manage inappropriate content, and collaborate with local organizations.

Website

- **Maintenance:** Regular updates to ensure information is current and accessible.
- **Content:** Post YTC meeting dates, agendas, minutes, news, events, and sustainability information.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure compliance with Accessibility Guidelines.

Email Communications

- **Frequency:** 1-2 times per month.
- **Content:** Send updates on events, important news, and monthly round-ups. Promote the mailing list at events.

Local Organisations and Schools

- **Collaboration:** Share information on events and initiatives aimed at specific groups.

Newsletter

- **Frequency:** Every 3-4 months. One printed version per year will be sent out to all households (7,959 households as of 31.03.25). A PDF version will be on the YTC website, and posters advertising the newsletter will be placed on the YTC notice boards. Copies will also be available at the library, doctor's surgeries, and the YTC Stall at the May Fayre. Further copies will be available from the YTC office.
- **Content:** Feature photos from recent events, local news, and YTC updates. Ensure sustainability in printed versions.

Press Releases

- **Target:** Identify local publications for distributing news and event information.
- **Channels:** Press releases via Yateley News and Mail, local radio, and television when appropriate.

Offline Communications

- **Methods:** Use noticeboards, banners, posters, and local magazines. Collaborate with local businesses and libraries for event promotion.
- **Noticeboards:** Use of three internal noticeboards in YTC halls and seven external YTC notice boards situated in the following locations:
 - Main car park, YTC office
 - Corner of Vigo Lane and Hall Lane
 - Opposite Monteagle Community Centre
 - Manor Park at the junction with the Reading Road
 - East Green, Blackwater
 - Frogmore Playground
 - Forge Court

Additional Methods

- **Email Groups:** Develop existing email groups to facilitate two-way communication.
- **Meeting Dates:** Publish dates of all YTC and committee meetings on the YTC website.
- **Annual Town Meeting:** Hold an annual town meeting for residents.
- **Annual Report:** Include the annual report in the first newsletter following the annual town meeting, available from the YTC office or website.
- **Agendas:** Post agendas for YTC meetings on the YTC website and notice boards.
- **Public Participation:** Invite members of the public and press to attend all YTC and committee meetings, with a public participation session at the start of each meeting (at the Chair's discretion).
- **Financial Notices:** Display financial audit notices at the YTC office.
- **Financial Reports:** Include financial reports with minute documentation on the YTC website.
- **4-Year Plan:** Make the YTC 4-Year Plan available on the YTC website.
- **Event Promotion:** Publish YTC events during the year by banners at Church End Green or Yateley Green.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- **Face-to-Face Meetings:** Engage with residents at public events such as the May Fayre and other local fetes.
- **YTC Offices:** Open 5 days a week, 9am-4pm, for residents to visit and engage with YTC staff.
- **Open Forum:** At all Full Council and Committee meetings, which are held in public, there is an open forum item which provides an opportunity for members of the public to bring matters to the attention of the Council.
- **Contact Details:** Ensure councillor and office contact details are available on the YTC website.
- **Surveys:** When appropriate, create and publicise surveys to find out public opinion in order to influence YTC strategy

6. AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Residents

- **Older Residents:** Use newsletters, noticeboards, and email lists. Consider large print versions and drop-in sessions.
- **45-60 Age Range:** Utilize all communication methods, with a focus on simple messaging and online engagement.
- **25-45 Age Range:** Prefer digital communication and newsletters. Focus on family-oriented messaging.
- **16-25 Age Range:** Use social media, particularly Instagram. Provide clear, targeted messaging on local issues.
- **Under 16s:** Engage through schools and youth groups with parent/guardian consent.

Residents with Disabilities

- **Methods:** Use diverse communication methods and ensure accessibility. Provide easy-to-read summaries and hold meetings in accessible venues.

Service Users

- **Facility Hirers:** Provide quick access to information and booking details. Promote facilities through various channels.
- **Cemeteries and Allotments:** Maintain separate, dedicated webpages for sensitive information.

Volunteers

- **Methods:** Use clear, easy-to-read messaging. Share good news stories and praise volunteer efforts.

Funders, Other Councils, and Principal Authorities

- **Methods:** Use digital communication. Share important news and maintain positive, supportive messaging.

Local Businesses

- **Methods:** Use digital communication and WhatsApp groups. Promote events and consider sponsorship opportunities.

Developers

- **Methods:** Use digital communication. Maintain neutral messaging and encourage direct engagement with residents.

7. Branding and Acknowledgment

- **Logo Usage:** Ensure the YTC logo is used in communications for sponsored events and initiatives and external organisations use the logo correctly, correct aspect ratio, colours, etc.
- **Grant Acknowledgment:** Require acknowledgment of YTC contributions in publicity materials for events supported by grants.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Social Media Metrics:** Track reach, visits, and follows on social media platforms.
- **Website Analytics:** Monitor website traffic and user engagement.
- **Feedback:** Collect feedback from residents and stakeholders to continuously improve communication efforts.

9. Review

This strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and aligned with YTC's objectives and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

Amendment Record

Version 1: Agreed 07.04.25

Version 2: Agreed 13.04.26

Due for Review: April 2027