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Meeting: Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee, Item ATC1.11

Date: 03rd August 2021

Author: Matt Harrison, Chair of the Town Council

Subject: Design, launch and curate a website for the town, applicable for residents, tourists and businesses

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To propose to councillors the Council utilises the new Marketing, Communications and Community Engagement Officer to build and maintain a website (working title 'HelloShepton').

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Shortly after the start of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020, the Town Council launched a sign-posting website called 'HelpShepton.info'. The purpose of the website was to collate information from multiple sources across the web into a single site to simplify the search for help. The website was marketed via social media, physical banners posted at strategic points around town and on corex boards in high flow pedestrian areas.
- 2.2 Further into the pandemic, Councillors discussed how useful the website was and how a more permanent help page could be built to assist the town's residents with join-up myriad streams of information into a single place. It was agreed that the Council would own the 'HelloShepton.info' web domain name and potentially develop it in the future. Other plans since took precedence and with the lack of dedicated communications resource, nothing has been progressed since.
- 2.3 2020 saw the closure of the town's Tourist Information Centre. One of the principle reasons the centre closed was financial unsustainability. The move to online for venues and events to sell tickets precipitated the closure leaving Shepton with no single information source for 'What's on' information.

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 The Town Council should develop, launch and maintain a website (working title: HelloShepton) which would promote and support Shepton's cultural, social, leisure, retail, hospitality and entertainment offer. It would be a single source of information for 'everything Shepton'.
- 3.2 What would success look like?
 - 3.2.1 A professionally designed, contemporary branded website that is bold, fun, human, engaging but easy to navigate and is easy to use on both mobile and static devices
 - 3.2.2 Widely marketed, talked about and supported at launch and engaged thereafter by people from all walks of life throughout the town
 - 3.2.3 Becomes the default place for Sheptonians and visitors to visit for up to date, honest, accurate information about their town
 - 3.2.4 The URL features on the 'Welcome to Shepton' town signs
- 3.3 Scope
 - 3.3.1 To be created and managed by Shepton Mallet Town Council but not overtly branded as such
 - 3.3.2 Need to define scope of curation: who provides editorial copy, who curates qualitative content?
 - 3.3.3 Potentially frame the site differently depending on user (resident or visitor)
 - 3.3.4 Review other town websites and potentially subsume them (e.g. Chamber of Commerce)
 - 3.3.5 Potential to dovetail with a physical presence in the library
 - 3.3.6 Potential to have a print presence at least once annually to reach those not online. See the Frome Annual
 - 3.3.7 To be launched with wide-ranging marketing: specific launch date when live with all branding out and about (permanent addition to 'Welcome to Shepton' road signs, banners, leaflets, social media, competitions etc.)
- 3.4 What a good job looks like (from either a design and/or content perspective):
 - www.visittotnes.co.uk
 - www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk
 - www.discoverfrome.co.uk
 - www.visitwellssomerset.co.uk
 - www.bradfordonavon.co.uk
 - www.aroundyourway.org
- 3.5 Potential content (in no particular order and not exhaustive!):
 - 3.5.1 Interactive events calendar
 - 3.5.2 Interactive town map (links to footpaths, historical aspects, businesses, venues etc.)
 - 3.5.3 Venues: list of available, dimensions, photos, location maps, booking contact details
 - 3.5.4 Community groups: list of contact details, what they do, who runs, when, where etc.
 - 3.5.5 Sport clubs: list of contact details, meeting days, venues

- 3.5.6 Business directory (curated by Chamber?)
- 3.5.7 Eating out/drinking out guide
- 3.5.8 Education links (all school info and links to websites/PTAs etc.)
- 3.5.9 Local government services; who to contact about what (bins, dog poo, potholes, street lights etc.)
- 3.5.10 Links to other statutory authorities
- 3.5.11 Community funding information (info. from Spark/SCF/others?)
- 3.5.12 Local (non-business, non-govt.) services: doctors, dentists, bank, PO, opticians, library info
- 3.5.13 How to volunteer / How to run a successful community group resources
- 3.5.14 Media centre (images of the town)
- 3.5.15 Local tourist accommodation
- 3.5.16 Nature walks
- 3.5.17 Cycle routes
- 3.5.18 Public transport info (bus timetables)
- 3.5.19 Skills bank (who can do what in town. Esp. useful for event organising)
- 3.5.20 Link to 'library of things'. Booking form also?
- 3.5.21 Directory of places of worship

4.0 Financial Information

- 4.1 The Town Council was recently granted £4k from Mendip Tourism Limited to help promote the town online. It is proposed this is earmarked for this project. The funds are currently held within 800-4223 Tourism.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 Since this is online activity, environmental impact is low. Any environmental impact is likely to be around physical marketing materials. However, all websites are hosted on servers in data centres which can be energy intensive. The Town Council's environmental policies will be followed throughout this activity.

6.0 Town Plan Reference

<p>Create a directory of groups, spaces and funding opportunities as well as a What's On Guide</p>	<p>Develop new ways of sharing information, through improving the connections between a wide range of community groups as well as sign posting to funding opportunities and places to meet</p> <p>Work collaboratively to create or promote spaces, which includes schools, library, community halls and Collett Park, which can be used as hubs for a range of cultural, arts, education and volunteering opportunities</p> <p>Develop a What's On guide of the activities and events in town</p>
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6.1

Promote and encourage Tourism

Work collaboratively to develop a tourism offering that encourages those who live locally to explore and encourages others to visit

Work with partners in the retail and hospitality industries to ensure that the visitor experience is thoughtful and inclusive

Promote sports and leisure facilities

Develop a community based sports and physical well-being activity plan that offers something for locals, for business and for visitors

Recommendations

- 7.1 That Councillors consider this report and agree whether to support the proposal above and delegate authority to the Council's Marketing Communications and Community Engagement to:
- a. Create a proposal for a minimum viable product based on this report, to present at a future meeting which includes costings, the technical arrangements for hosting and security as well as a project timeline.
 - b. To engage with the brand designer to propose the brand for the new website
 - c. To develop policies, for council adoption, to establish parameters for editorial and curatorial reasons
 - d. To use the Mendip Tourism Limited funds as described in section 4.1 to fund the website.