

Adam Davy, Kate Southan and Marcus Themans met on the evening of 12/7/18 to flush out some ideas within the subjects of Communications Tourism and Marketing

Much Wenlock is, along with most towns and villages, facing severe challenges driven by shopping, lifestyle, economic and social changes.

It was felt that an active public relations strategy is vital in supporting Much Wenlock through these changes, which are nothing new, and are not "one-offs", but the symptoms of a fluid and reactive modern society.

This strategic need has never been seriously addressed and has become stale and needs reinvigorating.

It was felt that the content and tone of all the current sites are off-putting, negative, somewhat geriatric and portraying the town as a place obsessed with history and devoid of vibrancy. In other words: stuck in the past.

There are also tacit negative undertones: this does not seem a friendly place.

In a search; the Council site came up strongly but this is focussed on the mechanics and rules of the Town Council, and has failed to engage with the population and not including people in the positive things that are going on.

It was felt that the Town Council's message has become too focussed on itself and not on addressing needs.

This has led to a disconnect with townspeople and has played into the hands of a very small number of negative, self serving individuals.

It was felt that "washing dirty linen in public" was causing great harm to the town, creating a negative atmosphere and false impression that we are all obsessed with petty little feuds.

Suggested Improvements:

A new Much Wenlock Town website (a "mother hen" page) with subsections and links to key groups.

This must be professionally developed. A suitable web domain has been obtained.

Social Media needs to be ramped up on all contemporary portals.

It was felt that a dedicated, salaried media manager should be funded and appointed to create a positive message and tone, maintain momentum and build a sense of fun in the town.

The "Love" strap line used by other Shropshire towns should be adopted; the "Love Much Wenlock" Twitter account has been offered to us.

The Town Page should be the one-stop-shop for finding out what is happening.

The town's site can also be the central directory of all businesses in the town and nearby.

We are wrongly seen as a retirement village and the large and wide range of interesting and successful businesses and opportunities in the area have been ignored.

A closed business Facebook group should be facilitated to encourage a dialogue between businesses leading to cooperation and a sense of local inclusion that may serve the role of a Chamber of Commerce without boring meetings and unnecessary bureaucratic hierarchies.

On Tourism; it was felt that we should be more active in encouraging visitors. We should be helping the fundraising activities of the fantastic main events in the town through facilitation of grant funding opportunities for business development, culture, sport, education and health benefits.

With the help of a professional fund-finder there are, with a bit of imagination and application, many fund sources that could be of great help to the town's activities which, for all their successes, are always fragile.

Redeveloping the public toilets would be of great benefit.

The relationship with The Edge and the Leisure Centre needs strengthening in order to widen and reinforce what's on offer to visitors.

Whenever there is music in the town, it lifts the atmosphere.

Busking should be encouraged.

Music events could also be coordinated and facilitated; help with a venue and infrastructure?

Much Wenlock Town Council should be cooperating and working closely with Shropshire Council.

The Christmas lights should have their own lighting up event in November; carried out by someone interesting.

This will be in cooperation with the schools, church, choirs and the shops and other businesses.

It might also be a suitable time to reaffirm the Battle's Over theme.

This report, in summary, aims to highlight the need for a new approach to supporting the Town and taking on a more proactive, professional and planned strategy.

To reiterate: This includes three areas of strategic support:

Developing a new town website and social media platforms.

Engage a part-time communications and public relations manager.

Engage a fund-finder to enable outside financial support for Town Council and other community group activities.