

# MARKETING & **COMMUNICATIONS** STRATEGY

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Warwick District Council  
*2019-2023*





## INTRODUCTION

Our aim is to deliver a first class, effective and efficient communication service for the council, which is valued by senior management, colleagues, councillors and stakeholders. The Strategy has a clear focus, clear objectives, measures impact and outcomes and engages with and represents the voice of our residents and staff. Our communications will be credible, consistent across all platforms and reflect the customer journey.

This strategy sets out the council's key communication aims:

- Deliver the council's news in a clear, balanced format
- Promote and celebrate the council's successes
- Promote a responsive and decisive decision making process
- Develop and improve our digital capabilities to use them effectively
- Demonstrate collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Engage and inform staff through our internal communications strategy

## WHY IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS IMPORTANT?

The Local Government Association, the leading organisation for best practice in local government communication, advocates a powerful, well thought through communications strategy which, by working collaboratively with our colleagues across the council, will raise the council's profile and enhance its reputation amongst members, the media and residents.

In summary, the council's marketing and communications strategy will:

- Improve and enhance reputation and build trust
- Support the political leadership of the council
- Help to deliver the council's priorities, initiatives and decisions
- Improve communications across the council
- Develop staff as ambassadors for the council

This strategy will incorporate a clear flow of communications to councillors to enable them to be effective in their roles and as ambassadors for the council, supporting and promoting policies and decisions in their own wards. It will evolve continuously in this digital age, to use data, insight and digital technology to move from our traditional role as broadcaster, to one of relationship-builder, where we are able to build trust.

## THE IMPACT OF NOT HAVING A STRATEGY

There are a number of issues associated with not having a co-ordinated strategy, such as sending out the wrong message at the wrong time, using the wrong channel or not reaching the right audience. The impact of this will be reviewed with the service area's risk register at the time we are commissioning the marketing and communications campaign.



## WDC BRAND

The council's brand is a consistent, recognisable and credible reminder of 'who' the council is and what is important to it. We continue to evolve the brand as forward thinking, innovative and ambitious, working collaboratively to represent the voice of our residents to achieve our vision; "to make Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit."

The following values underpin the council's brand:

- Honesty and openness
- Fairness and equality
- Community focused
- Environmentally sensitive
- Offering value for money

A successful brand establishes values which are synonymous with its name and a relationship with its audiences built on trust. We will know when we have achieved that, because insight tells us that we will find our customers are far more likely to understand and support the work we do, the decisions we make and the actions we are asking them to take, if they have a positive view of the brand.

The council's 'Fit for the Future' Strategy provides a framework for our brand which has 3 key themes, with external and internal influences:

|          | PEOPLE                     | SERVICES                     | MONEY                                       |
|----------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| EXTERNAL | Health, Homes, Communities | Green, Clean, Safe           | Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment      |
| INTERNAL | Effective Staff            | Maintain or improve services | Firm financial footing over the longer term |

## OUR NARRATIVE & KEY MESSAGES

The narrative is our story, our background and what we want to say about the council. Through a series of carefully crafted and consistent phrases the narrative develops our brand, builds up a picture of the council's services, people and money. This results in our stakeholders, the media, residents and staff forming a positive opinion ahead of their dealings with us.

The council's narrative is split into two strands:

1. The corporate narrative
2. The story about the services

## TWO KEY NARRATIVE STRANDS

| CORPORATE NEWS   | THE STORY ABOUT THE SERVICES  |
|--|---|
| We have a clear vision and mission   | We provide value for money services   |
| We will share our news widely and celebrate our successes  | We ensure you understand which services we offer and how to access them                                       |
| We put people at the heart of all our decisions  | Your customer journey will meet brand expectations  |
| We are innovative and enterprising in our approach   | We re-invest in our services and strive for continuous improvement  |
| We have strong and decisive leadership   | We will share and explain the decisions made about the council and its services                               |
| We recognise that one size does not fit all and will communicate in the right way at the right time depending on who you are | You will understand the services we provide and what we are informing you or asking you to in respect of them |
| We engage with and represent our residents   | We use what you tell us to improve our services and inform our decisions                                      |
| We speak to you in an open and honest way  | We inform you about our services in the right way at the right time   |
| We value our staff   | Our staff are successful ambassadors and have the right skills to deliver our services                        |
| We care about the community and the environment  | We follow best practice in our service delivery to support and protect what we care about                     |
| You will find our news consistent across all our channels and platforms  | You will find our staff and service delivery consistent with what we have told you about it                   |

## COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

To deliver the strategy, our objectives at a strategic level can be summarised as follows;

- Owning and sharing the council's news as widely as possible
- Promoting and celebrating its successes
- Demonstrating its value and effectiveness
- Ensure we are able to contribute to news items about the council or its services so that the public receive balanced news
- Promoting and maintaining the council's reputation and brand through its leadership
- Supporting service areas in improving their communications
- Informing and equipping staff to share the council's news

## DELIVERING THE OBJECTIVES

The way we deliver our communication, internally and externally, will fall into the three key categories below;

### 1. ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT

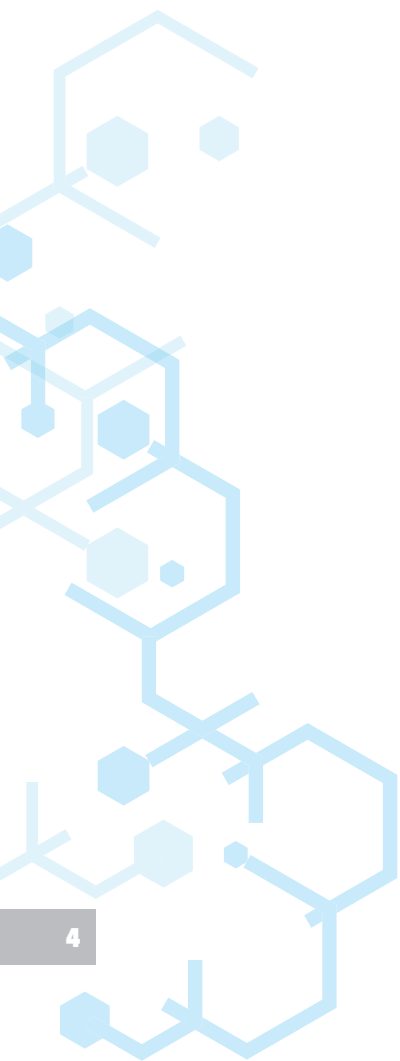
The People Strategy provides the internal framework for engagement with staff, through various channels including staff voice, managers' forum, and the Workforce Steering group. Externally, consultation and insight will inform the choice of platforms and channels to deliver messages to the target audience in the right way.

### 2. SUPPORTING & PROMOTING DECISION MAKING

To ensure effective communications of our news by key officer and councillors, regular communication and updates are provided to support their communication of decisions made by the council. In addition the team will provide comment and responses to current issues across external channels, liaising with the press and monitoring social media.

### 3. COMMERCIAL AWARENESS OF OUR PROCESSES

Focus on providing value for money, cost effective communications through the channels we use and collaborating with our partners to reduce costs and avoid duplication of effort. In addition we will investigate ways of securing external revenue opportunities for the council.





## THE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS TEAM DELIVERS THE FOLLOWING:

### CAMPAIGN PLANNING

We will work with your team to put together a Marketing Campaign Plan. This will set out your service area's objectives, customer insight, purpose of the communication and the process of evaluation and monitoring its effectiveness. We will produce and deliver your campaign across the most cost effective and efficient channels, reviewing learning points for ongoing improvement.

### DIGITAL MARKETING

The council's Digital Strategy informs the direction of its focus which is to enable our customers to access our services, carry out their transactions and communicate with the council at their own convenience.

The Website is central to both our digital communication and customer service and in addition to managing the corporate website, we work with service areas to ensure they can manage and maintain their website pages and that they comply with relevant best practice and legislation. In addition ensure we are sharing news across partner websites appropriately.

We continuously research and develop our own suite of communication tools, such as video, infographic, gifs and memes to ensure we can utilise digital channels effectively and reach our target audiences as they too take up new and developing digital platforms.

We also work with staff and councillors to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to use social media effectively to achieve a positive and consistent tone of voice for the council and one which is aligned to the customer journey.

### PRINTED PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

We design, copyright and print all promotional material for the council and will research the most cost effective way of reaching the target audience. This covers printing committee papers to large posters, leaflets and booklets. Our in-house print service provides small print runs quickly and cost effectively. In addition we manage the print framework to ensure all other print we commission is produced cost effectively and on time by our external providers. We comply with best practice, plain English guidelines and accessibility legislation with all our printed material. We also adhere to the Copyright Law and Code of best practice for council publicity observe Purdah and any political compliance, unique to this industry.

We manage the photocopier framework and monitor the cost effective print of material across the council.

### FRONT FACING SUPPORT

We speak to our customers and residents to engage with them in their own language. We achieve this level of engagement through exhibitions, press conferences, workshops, surveys and events.

We also support the council's leadership in delivering their comments as visible and recognisable spokespeople for the council.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

We commission quality photography to enhance and support promotional material and messages across all channels.

### MEDIA LIAISON

We have effective relationships with local media and work hard to deliver good quality, relevant news releases as well as respond to requests for information in an open and honest way. In addition, we provide appropriate spokespeople who can comment on current and topical issues. We continue to support the development of staff and councillors in their media and social media training to maintain and develop a consistent and authoritative "voice" of the council.

Clear measurement and monitoring of our media coverage will continue to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of our media liaison.



## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

A vital aspect of our communication strategy is how we engage our staff, managers, councillors, partners and anyone connected to the council in whatever capacity, because engaged staff will:

- Be proud to advocate their work and serve the public
- Talk about the council's mission and vision in a positive and consistent way
- Know that their contribution counts and that they can challenge back
- Own and adopt the council's values
- Access the information they need to do their jobs well

One person can easily undermine the brand (and all our hard work in building up relationships and trust) by one wrong, mis-informed, poorly timed, email, phone call, tweet, Facebook post or conversation!

We aim to deliver key news and decisions to staff in advance of publishing externally. We ensure that internal channels of communication enable staff to not only receive the news in a clear and understandable way, but that they are able to question and clarify what they have been told and to challenge communication so that we are building two-way engagement and also continuous improvement of the way we communicate our news.

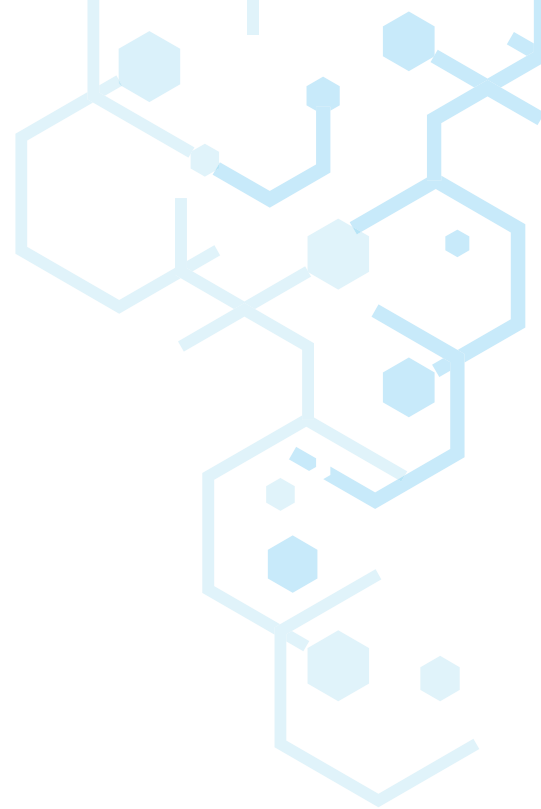
We are mindful of staff receiving our external communications as customers and so we must ensure that our internal communication is not only consistent, but offers further explanation to enable staff to support and promote the council's narrative themselves. Our internal channels include the Intranet, Managers' Forum, Rumour Mill, Emails and how we share the corporate narrative in our team meetings.

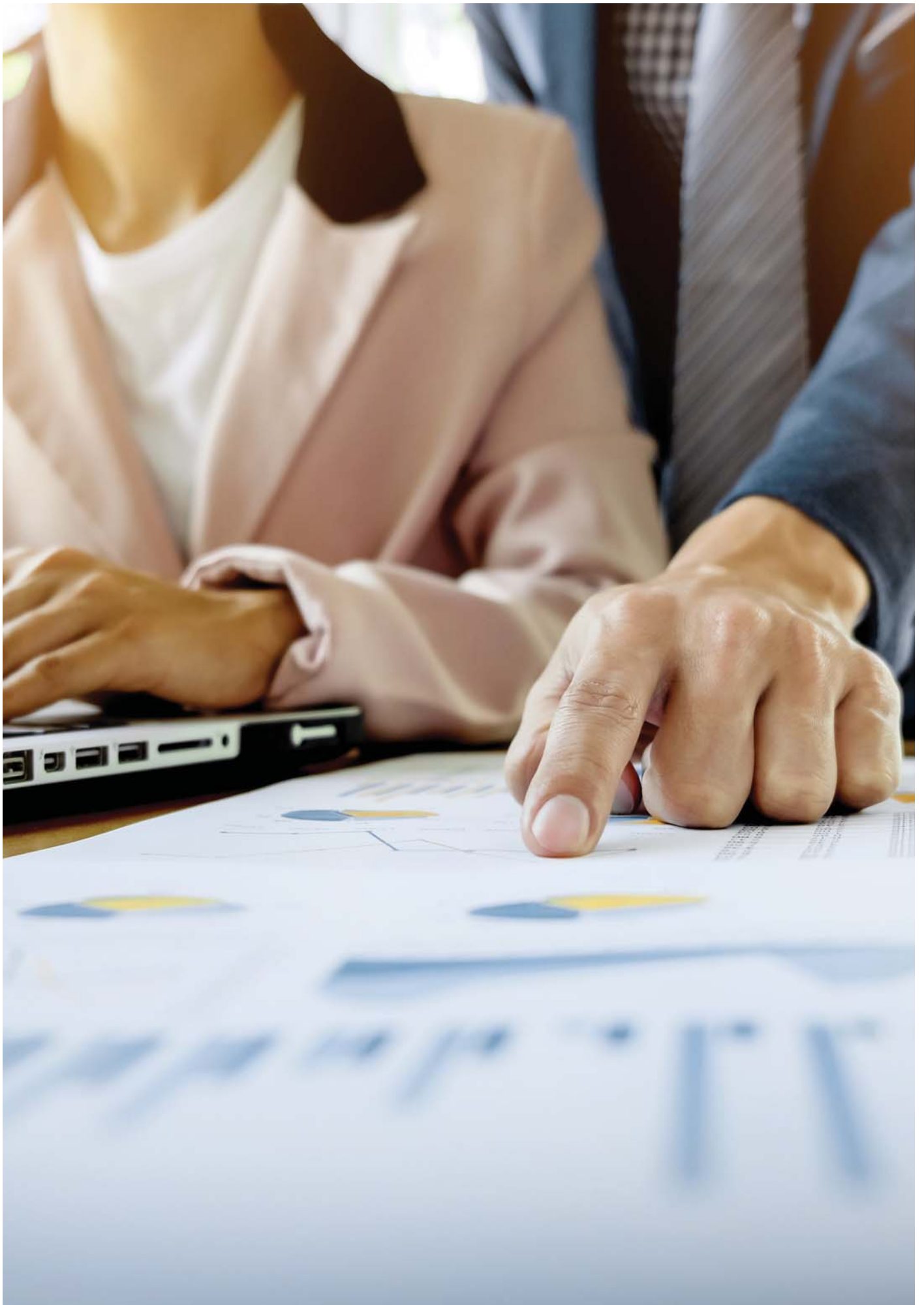
The council's Staff Voice group provides representatives from across the council's service areas that provide feedback on new initiatives and policies, as well as bringing staff issues and concerns to the meetings for further discussion. This group is governed by the Workforce Steering Group, which ensures all feedback is heard by senior managers and can be followed up in the most appropriate way.

Internal Communications is informed by results of our Investors In People review, Peer Review, our close alignment to HR and other feedback mechanisms.

Our team aims to achieve effective internal communications and staff engagement:

1. Ensure we agree clear objectives for internal communication - we should not be rushing out internal messages without understanding the impact they will have on staff.
2. Organisational Listening - understand how staff feel and what effect messages will have on them.
3. Make connections - across the organisation, so we can ensure that all groups are engaged and feel represented. In addition utilise the different groups to engage with staff on a number of strategic levels ie. Staff Voice, Managers Forum, SMT, CMT
4. Challenge - provide guidance on good quality communications.
5. Provide feedback to senior management - in an honest and constructive way about the impact of communications.
6. Role models - the team should be living the values
7. Curate content - ensure that we provide ideas and strategy for story-telling and responding to objectives. And use our internal channels to effectively share them.





## OUR APPROACH

To focus on delivering proactive, high quality communications which are led by our campaign plans and make the best use of all the communication channels and tools. By putting insight and evaluation into all the work we do, we will be able to measure the impact of our communication activity. All our communications will be targeted to the appropriate audience.

All communication will include our narrative to promote and enhance the council's reputation and to help build support for our decisions and initiatives. We will provide the professional leadership to enable service areas to take their plans forward and promote their own initiatives.

## AUDIENCES

We will continue to research and develop our understanding of our audiences, so we can deliver our communication based on current insight into customer preferences for receiving news and information from the council.

### WHO ARE OUR AUDIENCES?

We use customer insight from research, Warwickshire Observatory and service areas to improve our understanding of who our audience is and how they like to be communicated with. This facilitates effective communications as we use the tools available to use to reach each group at the right time and in the right way.

| PERMANENT RESIDENTS | STAKE-HOLDERS   | WDC          | HARD TO REACH        | TEMPORARY RESIDENTS |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Residents           | Suppliers       | Staff        | Less able            | Traveller groups    |
| Tenants             | Govt Agencies   | Staff Groups | Special needs        | Students            |
| Media reps          | Business owners | Councillors  | Non-English speaking | Tourists            |
| Business owners     |                 | Trade unions | Dis-engaged          | Visitors            |
| Ethnic Grozups      |                 | MPs          |                      |                     |
|                     |                 | Contractors  |                      |                     |



## MONITORING & EVALUATION

| FREQUENCY      | Platform/channel   | Monitor Output/out-take/outcomes  | Action  |
|----------------|--|---|---|
| <b>DAILY</b>   | Press<br>Radio<br>TV<br>Social media via Hootsuite<br>Customer feedback forms for design/print work                | Coverage achieved<br>Quality of coverage<br>Mood and feeling<br>Response to print and design work | Feedback to Head of Service, CMT, councillors as appropriate<br><br>Recommend response or mitigation eg. statement  |
| <b>WEEKLY</b>  | Members update for councillors<br>Rumour Mill posts<br>Regular communications eg. newsletters                      | Confirm click open rate<br>Summarise Rumour Mill posts  | Review content of Members update<br><br>Pick out emerging themes on Rumour Mill and suggest any action to SMT/CMT as appropriate  |
| <b>MONTHLY</b> | Review communications for the previous month<br>Review customer feedback forms for design and print<br>Staff Voice | Produce media stats to circulate to SMT/CMT/councillors<br><br>Summarise responses to surveys     | Pick out emerging themes to follow up or mitigate<br><br>Recommend action eg. Further press release<br><br>Review customer feedback and implement actions required to improve service |
| <b>AD-HOC</b>  | Speak to the audience<br>Pulse surveys<br>Focus groups<br>Business newsletter<br>Marketing Campaigns               | Summarise responses to surveys<br><br>Information updates<br>Service area specific publicity      | Test communication<br><br>Monitor satisfaction levels<br>Agreed measures  |

We produce media stats to ensure our work meets the objectives set out in the Action Plan. These are discussed at our team meetings to inform evaluate our work and inform any changes.

## GOVERNANCE OF THE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

THE POLICIES AND GUIDANCE WE OWN ARE:

- Social Media - this ensures staff understand how to use social media in both the work and their personal lives and the impact mis-use can have on the council's reputation.
- Media Policy - this ensures that staff are clear about their responsibilities if asked to comment to the media.
- Brand guidelines - how and where we use the council's logos
- Inviting Dignitaries - protocols for inviting dignitaries to events organised by your service area
- Accessibility guidelines for print - to ensure all our marketing material is compliant and accessible.
- Website Accessibility policy
- ICT and Digital Strategy

THOSE WE REFERENCE AND ADHERE TO:

- GDPR
- Code of Publicity
- Purdah
- RNIB accessibility guidelines for print
- Web content accessibility guidelines
- Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark

The Marketing & Communications Strategy will be communicated with key stakeholders and communication representatives across the council, to co-ordinate and combine; moving forward as "one council". This strategy will enable the council to understand the internal and external context of the work we do. In addition it will provide a framework to monitor and measure whether we are achieving our outcomes and make any adjustments accordingly.

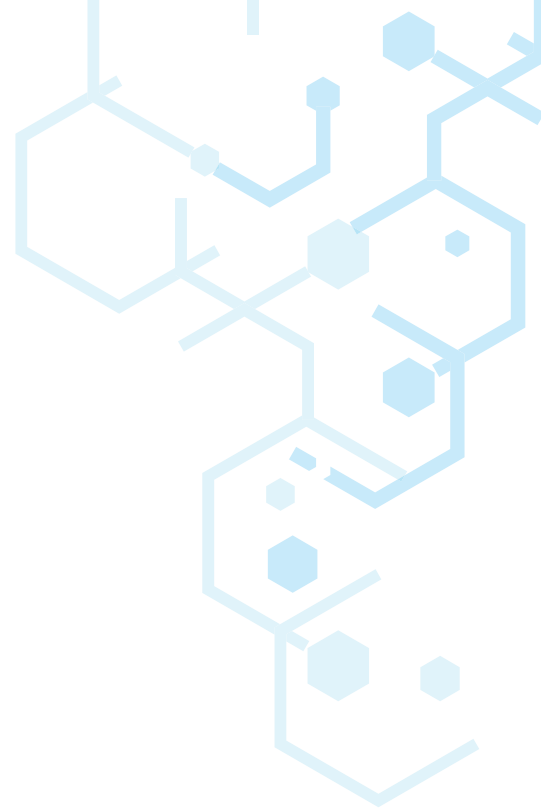
The actions associated with the Marketing & Communications Strategy will feed into the People Enabling Plan (PEP) as one of the 6 themes 'Communications, Involvement and Engagement' which is monitored by both the People Strategy Steering Group, and Workforce Steering Group. It is these groups that will provide the governance to ensure the actions associated with the plan are delivered in correlation with the findings of the IIP Review, the Peer Review and the Fit for the Future objectives.

## ACTION PLANS

The action plan will be integrated into the People Strategy Action Plan to provide a cohesive and cross-council response to the findings of the IIP Review and to achieve the communication aims of this strategy.

### KEY ACTIONS:

1. Deliver the council's news & celebrate its successes
2. Promote a responsive decision making process
3. Develop and improve digital capabilities
4. Demonstrate collaboration with partners and stakeholders
5. Engage and inform staff using internal communications
6. Embed the People Strategy using internal groups to support staff engagement
7. Refresh the Council's FFF brand and core values to ensure they remain relevant and current
8. Make effective use of metrics to gauge staff perceptions and response to the council's narrative



## CAMPAIGN PLANS

Delivered using the following framework

### ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

### COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES (C-SMART\*)

| INPUTS   | OUTPUTS   | OUTTAKES  | OUTCOMES   | ORGANISATION IMPACT  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>What do we do before and during the activity?</b><br>OASIS** Planning<br>Preparation<br>Pre-testing<br>Production | <b>What is delivered &amp; to which target audience?</b><br>Distribution<br>Exposure<br>Reach<br>Events | <b>What the target audience think, feel or do to make a decision:</b><br>Awareness<br>Understanding<br>Interest<br>Engagement<br>Preference<br>Support & attendance | <b>The result of your activity on the audience:</b><br>Impact<br>Influence<br>Effects - attitude, behaviour<br>Referrals | <b>The quantifiable impact on the organisation's goals:</b><br>ROI<br>Cost reduction<br>Retention<br>Reputation<br>Attitude & behaviour change |

## NOTES ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

1. Set Smart Objectives - CSMART\* - Challenging, Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely
2. Think about the target audience and how they like to be communicated with
3. Ensure an integrated channel approach ie. consistency is key
4. Collect benchmarks and baselines where possible ie. what is the start point
5. Include a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence - words and numbers!
6. Review the performance regularly
7. Act on insight to drive continuous improvement
8. Make the link between your organisational goals and KPIs

OASIS\*\* planning - a circular route back to the beginning to re-set and update along the life of the project:

- Objectives (SMART)
- Audience Insight
- Strategy
- Implement
- Scoring/evaluation

