

## **POLICY SCRUTINY GROUP – 11TH JULY 2017**

### **Report of the Head of Strategic Support**

#### **ITEM 7      REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING SURVEYS AND CONSULTATION**

##### Purpose of Report

To provide the Group with details of the Council's approach to consultation and the Council's Communications Strategy 2017-2021.

##### Background

The Communications Strategy was agreed by the Council's Senior Management Team at its meeting on the 26th April 2017. The strategy sets out how the Council will develop its external and internal communications to meet the needs and demands of its customers, staff, members and partners over the next four years.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- grow the Council's own audiences using digital channels
- deliver a first-class media management service
- continue to use and develop key print publications to help reach a wider audience, particularly those without internet access
- execute four key campaigns each year which support the Corporate Plan and are fully evaluated to measure success
- ensure the web content is well-managed, easy-to-read and highly-rated by an independent assessment
- continue to develop internal communications channels to meet the needs of the organisation and support staff engagement.

It is intended that at the end of the strategy the Council's communications will:

- be more digital and audience-focussed
- include more engaging content such as video (recorded and live) and images which can be shared
- empower staff to utilise social media and digital channels to engage with their with customers directly and peers as well as amplify key messages
- still place a great focus on media management
- maximise campaigns to get across key messages
- have solid, built-in evaluation techniques to measure communications effectiveness across the council
- include internal communications which are more engaging with staff and suited to a modern, mobile workforce.

The strategy covers social media, e-newsletters, the media, Council print publications and materials, campaigns, Council website and internal communications.

The strategy includes an action plan which will be reviewed annually so progress can be monitored. In addition, the Communications Team works with services to plan significant communications or highlight potential issues for the year ahead.

A copy of the Communications Strategy 2017-2021 is available at Annex A.

As part of the Communications Strategy, and following the Residents' Survey in 2015, consultation with residents has also been reviewed and a briefing note has been compiled which provides guidance to officers for all levels of consultation.

The briefing note covers response rates / sample sizes and the weighting which can be given to responses. A copy of the briefing note is available at Annex B.

In relation to recent surveys, the Communications Team has been involved in 11 surveys where the Council has sought opinions from the public. Some services have commissioned their own surveys with external companies and there have also been internal surveys and feedback forms.

Below are the surveys the Communications Team has been involved in:

1. Residents' Survey 2015
2. Community Governance Review April 2017
3. Public Spaces Protection Orders Consultation September 2015
4. Bedford Square Gateway Consultation June 2016
5. Charnwood Working for Business Survey September 2016
6. Charnwood Borough Council Market Customer Survey 2017
7. Loughborough Markets Customer Survey May 2015
8. Charnwood Borough Council Allocation Policy Consultation May 2017
9. Shelthorpe Engagement Questionnaire October 2016
10. Loughborough Markets Customer Survey 2016
11. Charnwood Borough Council Empty Homes Survey

#### *Response rates*

The Residents' Survey 2015 attracted 1,080 responses and the Empty Homes Survey 349 responses while others were completed by between 20 and 80 people.

#### *What has worked well:*

- The surveys with the best responses have generally had a budget for marketing. For example, around £6,000 was spent on postcards which

were sent to every home in the Borough and around 60 per cent of all responses said they filled in the survey after seeing the postcard indicating a clear return on investment.

- For the Empty Homes Survey, a letter/flyer was included in Council Tax bills which were sent to all homes in the Borough at a cost of £1,800. Soon after being posted, the survey had its busiest two weeks with 282 responses coming in.
- Although the Bedford Square Survey response rate was relatively low, the quality of the responses was quite high. In a similar vein, the Community Governance Review received approximately 40 responses which will help make an informed decision.
- Having a clear idea of who the target audience is for a survey helps focus any communications and manage expectations for a response rate.
- It helps if the survey will have a wide appeal – for example, what do you think of council services (Residents' Survey) or an issue that may affect a number of people (Empty Homes Premium)

#### *Lessons learned:*

- One area to improve is the recording of where people have seen surveys to help inform future consultations. A standard question needs to be introduced to all surveys to help inform future promotions of surveys.

#### *Use of electronic communication methods:*

- Use of e-comms is standard for all consultations involving the Communications Team. Those channels include
  - social media
  - website – this is really passive as people come to the Council's website to complete a task or find something out and then want to leave.
  - e-alerts (mainly to the Virtual Citizens Panel comprising 120 people) but this is an area the Council is looking to develop.
- What is key for digital channels is that the content used has to be engaging and they tend to reach more people if it includes graphics, a video or a story that explains why it is important people fill in a survey. Social media posts which simply say "please fill in this survey" will generally reach fewer people. Creating engaging content takes resources.
- Encouraging sharing of social media messages and content also helps reach more people.

Background Papers:       None

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# Charnwood Borough Council Communications Strategy 2017-2021

Prepared, April, 2017



## Foreword

It is imperative that we have strategically planned communications at the Council to ensure we are engaging fully with our customers, partners, businesses, Members and staff.

Our communications need to be fit for 2017 and beyond. We need to embrace digital channels to help get our key messages and information to the right people, at the right time and in the right way.

And it's not just about broadcasting messages. We need to use these same channels to garner customer feedback, opinions, views and ideas. We need to join in the conversations taking place about how we make Charnwood a better, safer and more prosperous place.

Utilising these digital channels will also enable us to build solid networks within our communities and that applies to more than just the communications team, but other staff and members as well.

At the same time we must also recognise that some people will still want more traditional forms of contact with the Council. Not everyone is on the internet and we must be conscious of the harder-to-reach audiences.

Ensuring our communications are audience focused will make them more effective. Our Corporate Plan 2017-2021 sets out a number of priorities and every single one of them will have a critical element of communications, be it internally or externally. Therefore it is essential that this strategy supports the Corporate Plan and helps us achieve our goals.

What we are striving for is an outstanding communications function that is hard-wired to achieving our business goals.

**Cllr Jonathan Morgan, Lead Member for Communications**

## Executive Summary

1. The strategy sets out how we will develop the Council's external and internal communications to meet the needs and demands of our customers, staff, members and partners over the next four years.
2. The primary areas of focus will be:
  - ) Developing more digital channels, in particular social media and e-newsletters
  - ) Empowering staff and members to use social media and other digital channels to engage with customers and develop networks
  - ) Developing campaigns to support the aim of the Corporate Plan and ensure they are fully evaluated.

### 1. Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 Since the 2013-16 Communication Strategy was originally agreed, the communications landscape has continued to change at pace.
- 1.2 The print audiences of local media have continued to decline in recent years with some circulations dropping by over a third between 2012 and 2015. The local media's website and social media audiences have grown in that time.
- 1.3 The Council's own social media channels have continued to grow in popularity (Twitter followers up 35% in 2014/15) and there is great potential to develop more digital channels, in particular e-newsletters, to target specific audiences.
- 1.4 Digital communications, in particular social media, are being used more by staff outside the communications team as they interact directly with their customers and Members are also developing their own networks on social media.
- 1.5 While digital communications will increase, the strategy retains some traditional communications, such as the print publications, to reach people who are not on the internet.
- 1.6 The purpose of the strategy is to provide a clear direction for the development of communications across the organisation.

### 2. Key objectives and outcomes

- 2.1 The objectives are to:
  - ) Grow the Council's own audiences using digital channels
  - ) Deliver a first-class media management service
  - ) Continue to use and develop key print publications to help reach a wider audience, particularly those without internet access

- ) Execute four key campaigns each year which support the Corporate Plan and are fully evaluated to measure success
  - ) Ensure the web content is well-managed, easy-to-read and highly-rated by an independent assessment
  - ) Continue to develop internal communications channels to meet the needs of the organisation and support staff engagement
- 2.2 At the end of this strategy the Council's communications will:
- ) be more digital and audience-focussed
  - ) include more engaging content such as video (recorded and live) and images which can be shared
  - ) empower staff to utilise social media and digital channels to engage with their with customers directly and peers as well as amplify key messages
  - ) still place a great focus on media management
  - ) maximise campaigns to get across key messages
  - ) have solid, built-in evaluation techniques to measure communications effectiveness across the council
  - ) include internal communications which are more engaging with staff and suited to a modern, mobile workforce

### 3. Background

3.1 Before we look at the Council's communications channels we need to consider some national and local trends.

3.2 According to Ofcom's Communications Market Report (2016):

- ) 2015 was the first year in which the smartphone was considered to be the most important device for accessing the internet among all adults, overtaking the laptop
- ) 71 per cent of adults have a smartphone
- ) social media is increasingly being used by older people (51% of 55-64 year olds)
- ) 64 per cent of adults use social media
- ) 48% of UK adults say they have access to 4G - the superfast mobile internet connection – and it is available to 97.8% of UK premises
- ) the research suggests a typical adult spends an average of 25 hours online per week, with nearly half (42%) saying they go online or check apps more than 10 times a day
- ) there's been a decrease in the number of people reading newspapers (including print and digital versions), which fell by 5% to 50% of adults.

3.3 According to Telecom giant Cisco, by 2019 video traffic will be 80 per cent of all internet traffic.

- 3.4 It is clear we are living in a smartphone society and that includes Charnwood. Digital communications will only get faster, easier and more popular.
- 3.5 However, we must not lose sight that many of our customers include hard to reach groups who may not have easy access to technology or who prefer more traditional forms of communication. Around 12 per cent of people in Leicestershire and Rutland have never been online or used the internet directly according to the Internet Access Quarterly Update, Office for National Statistics. We will still aim to reach them via print publications, but must consider more targeted tactics as well.
- 3.6 The Council's Residents' Survey also offers an insight into how customers want to be communicated with and their current satisfaction levels with the Council's communications. The survey revealed 72 per cent of people were satisfied with the way the Council kept them informed. According to respondents, the most preferred methods of hearing about Council services were:
- ) Letters/leaflets (45%)
  - ) Website (37%)
  - ) Email (35%)
  - ) Council magazine (33%)
  - ) Local media (28%)
  - ) Twitter / Facebook (14%)
- 3.7 While Letters/Leaflets was the most popular choice there has been strong growth in the use of the website and social media and these are the channels widely expected to continue growing in use. National trends also reflect the continuing shift to digital channels.

## 4 Social Media

4.1 The Council has two main corporate social media profiles:

- ) Twitter: @CharnwoodBC – 5,400 followers (March 2017)
- ) Facebook: facebook.com/CharnwoodBC- 600 likes (March 2017)

- 4.1 The number of followers of the Council's Corporate Twitter account has doubled in the past two years and there is no indication that it will stop growing.
- 4.2 The Council's Facebook page had to be re-created last year due to an issue regarding access to the original account, therefore the number of likes are fairly low. However, content which interests people can still reach a significant number of people. For example, videos and images generally reach larger audiences than text-only posts. The Don't Muck Around Rap video was a key success with over 7,000 views on Facebook within three

days and the post reached 19,000 people, the biggest audience reached in one go on a Council social media account.

- 4.3 There is also the opportunity to boost posts using fairly low-cost advertising which increases the reach. For example, a £20 boost of a post promoting Easter activities reached over 9,000 people.
- 4.4 The Council also has profiles on YouTube and Flickr and some teams such as the Community Safety and the Markets teams also have social media profiles. Council venues including Charnwood Museum and Loughborough Town Hall also have social media profiles which can share some of our content when relevant and increase the number of impressions. In total, the Council has 13 active, directly associated Twitter and Facebook accounts.
- 4.5 Social media has changed the way residents interact with organisations affecting their lives, but according to the Local Government Association less than a fifth of councillors are using it. The LGA says that “this represents a missed opportunity”.
- 4.6 Out of 52 members at Charnwood, 14 have active social media profiles (Twitter or Facebook or both) and six with inactive accounts. (July 2016).
- 4.7 The BDO Local Government Social Media Survey 2015 found 74 per cent of respondents said that the approach taken by senior council leadership (officers and members) towards social media had a significant impact upon how organisations use it.

#### **What we will do:**

- ) Continue to grow social media audiences, primarily on Twitter and Facebook, with the aim of reaching 12,000 Twitter followers and 2,000 likes on Facebook by 2020. (Action Plan 1.1)
- ) Develop more engaging social media content such as video to explain Council priorities, get across key information to customers and stakeholders and grow audiences (Action Plan 1.2).
- ) Secure senior management buy-in of the use of social media to develop networks with customers / members / peers / stakeholders (Action Plan 1.3)
- ) Support the creation of team social media accounts to interact with customers and peers building in governance and best practice (Action Plan 1.4)
- ) Introduce social media guidance for staff to increase confidence in its use (Action Plan 1.5)
- ) Create a basic social media skills workshop for staff and members (Action Plan 1.6 & 1.7)
- ) Encourage more members to use social media and aim by 2018 to have 47 members with active social media profiles (Action Plan 1.8)
- ) Trial live-streaming of events on social media, including council meetings (Action Plan 1.9)

*Further measurements are contained in the Action Plan (Appendix 1)*

## 5 E-newsletters

5.1 The Council currently has three e-newsletters serving customers at Charnwood Museum, private sector landlords and the Council’s Virtual Citizens’ Panel. They have between 100 and 150 subscribers to each and are administered using a free account of Mailchimp.

### What we will do

- )] Create a monthly e-newsletter version of Charnwood News to distribute council key messages and information (Action Plan 1.10)
- )] Support services in the development of their own e-newsletters to interact with customers (Action Plan 1.11)

*Measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix 1)*

## 6 The Media

6.1 Below is a list of the main media organisations operating in Charnwood and who regularly cover Council activities and business.

MEDIA	VERIFIED CIRCULATION / AUDIENCE
Loughborough Echo	(2016 circulation – 9,018* / unique website users a month - 91,553**)
Leicester Mercury	(2016 circulation 25,859* / unique website users a month - 1.3 million*)
BBC Radio Leicester	(118,000*** listeners on average)
BBC East Midlands Today	Non available
ITV Central	Non available
Oak FM	Ceased trading July 2016
Fosse 107 (created late 2016)	Non available
There are also a number of other smaller printed titles such as the Thurmaston Times, Syston Town News, Birstall, Mountsorrel and Rothley Post editions.	Thurmaston Times delivered to 4,500 homes and the Syston Town News goes to 7,100 homes. Both have websites. Birstall, Mountsorrel and Rothley Posts has a combined circ of 10,000. Figures provided by the titles themselves.

\* Figures from [ABC newspaper circulation](#)

\*\* Figures from [The Joint Industry Committee for Regional Media Research](#)

\*\*\* [RAJAR](#)

6.2 In the year 2015/16, the majority of media coverage of Council business and activities was carried by the Loughborough Echo (70%), followed by the Leicester Mercury (17%) and then Radio Leicester (5%). In that year the

tone of coverage was judged to be: 34 per cent positive; 61 per cent neutral; five per cent negative.

- 6.3 It is worth bearing in mind the challenges facing regional newspapers. Most regional newspapers have suffered print circulation declines year on year and although their digital audiences are growing, they do not yet generate more income than print advertising. According to Ofcom's Communications Market Report (2016), the average UK adult spends more time each day on social media than reading a newspaper in print or online (25mins vs 15mins).
- 6.4 The local media still retain a sizeable and loyal audience. Their digital audiences, particularly on social media, should also not be ignored. The Loughborough Echo has over 7,000 Likes on Facebook and the Leicester Mercury 46,000, meaning they reach a significant number of people.
- 6.5 The media also influence the influencers such as partner organisations, local political groups and Members.

#### **What we will do**

- ) Continue to provide a pro-active approach to Council news and supply the local media with ready to use copy, pictures and video. More focussed selling-in of stories is to be encouraged and the development of relationships with key journalists (print, radio, TV). (Action Plan 2.1)
- ) Continue to monitor the media for reputation issues and take action if necessary as well as scan the horizon for potential issues (Action Plan 2.2)
- ) Improve media monitoring to include local media's websites and social media coverage as their audiences are becoming more and more significant. This will give us a better understanding of how far our messages are reaching in the press and of positive/negative/neutral coverage. Smaller publications will also be monitored to give a better overall picture, particularly in the rural areas. (Action Plan 2.3)
- ) Secure four pieces of TV coverage a year from proactive media work and selling-in of stories. (Action Plan 2.4)

*Further measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix 1)*

## **7 Council Print Publications and Materials**

7.1 The key publications are:

- ) Charnwood News Residents' Newsletter – delivered to most homes in the borough at zero cost to the taxpayer, three times a year. The publication is funded through advertising secured by the printing company. This arrangement has been in place since 2013
- ) Your Homes Matters – delivered to nearly 6,000 tenants four times a year

- 7.2 The communications team is involved in producing or procuring a number of other printed materials to support services including an external newsletter, posters and leaflets. Particularly significant projects include supporting the creation of the Loughborough in Bloom brochure.
- 7.3 The print publications, such as Charnwood News and Your Homes Matter, also offer a way to reach people who do not have internet access.

#### **What we will do**

- ) Continue to produce three copies of Charnwood News (Action Plan 3.1)
- ) Continue to produce four issues of Your Homes Matter per year (Action Plan 3.2)
- ) Refresh the design and content of both publications following customer feedback (Action Plan 3.3 and 3.4)
- ) Assess the demand, potential and any resources needed for an e-newsletter version of Your Homes Matter to provide an alternative format for tenants (Action Plan 3.5)

*Further measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix 1)*

## **8 Campaigns**

- 8.1 The Council has run a number of campaigns in recent years, some annual, some on a one-off basis. A campaign is defined as a series of planned activities designed to achieve a goal. Examples of Council campaigns include the annual Don't Muck Around campaign to tackle enviro-crime and the biennial residents' survey, but there are a host of smaller campaigns, including internal, which are conducted through the year.
- 8.2 The Government Communications Service says campaigns must contain:
- ) Objectives
  - ) Audience/Insight
  - ) Strategy/Ideas
  - ) Implementation
  - ) Scoring/Evaluation

#### **What we will do**

- ) Execute four communications-led campaigns a year which are clearly planned, evaluated with results fed back to the relevant Head of Service. The campaigns in the action plan are for 2016/17 as they will change every year. (Action Plan 4.1 – 4.4)

*Measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix 1)*

## 9 Charnwood Borough Council website

- 9.1 The Council website is hosted by Cuttlefish. Charnwood is part of a web unity group, including Oadby and Wigston and North West Leicestershire councils. Charnwood, as the lead authority in the unity group, holds the contract with Cuttlefish.
- 9.2 Content on the Council website is managed by the communications team and has around 1,150 pages with content. This was reduced from around 1,800 during a content review in 2015/16
- 9.3 Between July 1, 2015 and July 1, 2016 there were 2,598,651 page views (up 2.3% year-on-year) and the number website users was 437,396 (up 9.8% year-on-year).
- 9.4 Around 50 per cent of traffic to the Council website is from mobile devices and the most popular pages consistently relate to planning and refuse collection.
- 9.5 Assessments by the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) Better Connected scheme rated the Council as three stars in 2015 and two stars in 2016. The two star rating is similar to peers including Oadby and Wigston and North West Leicestershire.

### What we will do

- ) Develop the Council's website content in order to help achieve a Socitm four star rating and maintain it. Four stars is likely to depend on implementation of new e-forms which are due in early 2017. (Action Plan 5.1)
- ) Work with ICS and web unity partners to develop the look and usability of the website, particularly as more traffic is mobile based. (Action Plan 5.2)

*Measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix1)*

## 10. Internal Communications

- 10.6 Internal Communications helps leaders inform and engage employees in a way which motivates them to maximise their performance and deliver the business strategy in the most effective way.
- 10.7 The Council is committed to utilising all internal communications channels to ensure employees are engaged, have a voice, have a clear understanding of the organisation's objectives and how their roles fit in with those objectives.

10.8 The Council has a number of key internal communications channels which are used to interact with around 500 staff and 52 members. The key channels used by the Communications Team are:

- ) One Charnwood fortnightly staff e-newsletter (viewed on average 400-500 times)
- ) All-staff emails
- ) Intranet
- ) Ad-hoc staff briefings

**What we will do**

- ) Introduce annual all-staff briefings led by SMT and made interactive to boost engagement (Action Plan 6.1)
- ) Support the delivery and content management of the staff intranet where staff can access information, share content, news and views. (Action Plan 6.2)
- ) Introduce quarterly features in One Charnwood summarising the quarterly performance reports to better inform staff of organisational performance against targets. (Action Plan 6.3)
- ) Refresh the design of One Charnwood (Action Plan 6.4)
- ) Investigate and cost out introducing a “proper” e-newsletter version of One Charnwood which renders to suit mobile devices and desktops to meet the demands of an ever-increasing mobile workforce. (Action Plan 6.5)
- ) Develop a separate Internal Communications Strategy. (Action Plan 6.6)

*Measurements are contained in the Action Plan. (Appendix 1)*

## 11. Resources

11.1 The Communications Team handles external and internal communications which includes managing the content on the Council’s corporate website.

Communications Team Responsibilities	
) Compiling proactive media releases	) Producing four issues of Your Homes Matter a year
) Handling media inquiries	) Planning proactive communications activity for a number of campaigns
) Monitoring media coverage	) Producing digital content, including video, to support campaigns
) Horizon scanning for potential reputational issues	) Maintaining and managing content on the Council website
) Providing strategic media and communications advice to the senior management team and Cabinet	) Producing 24 issues of One Charnwood for staff
) Producing a weekly Media Briefing and presenting it to the Leader, Lead Member and Chief Executive	) Issuing all-staff emails and key messages on the intranet
) Managing the Council’s corporate social media accounts	) Providing an ad-hoc design service for various marketing materials and one
) Supporting and advising staff in the use	

<p>) of social media                  ) Producing three issues of Charnwood News a year</p>	<p>) newsletter                  ) Producing speeches and briefings                  ) Guardians of the Council's branding                  ) Co-ordinating translations and interpretations</p>
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- 11.2 Between April 1, 2015 and March 31, 2016 the Council's Communications team handled nearly 200 media inquiries, and issued more than 220 press releases and media statements. The Communications team comprises 3.5 FTE posts.
- 11.3 In terms of budgets, the communications team has access to a small budget within the Improvement and Organisational Development team and services tend to fund their own marketing activities, mostly through the Communications Team but sometimes independently.
- 11.4 In 2014/15 the Council spent around £47,000 on publicity, including newsletters, across all services (including Loughborough Town Hall and Charnwood Museum). This compares with £36,449 in 13/14 and £50,307 in 12/13.
- 11.5 As more staff are likely to be involved in social media / e-newsletters/content creation across the organisation, there will need to be a corporate approach to any software/hardware purchases in order to get best value for money.

## 12 Principles

- 12.1 The Communications Strategy will follow the best practice principles as set out by the Government Communication Service.
  - a. Our communications will be audience-focused and leverage customer insight
  - b. digital, and in particular, social media will be at the heart of our content
  - c. our communications will not only transmit key messages, but also generate a two-way conversation with our audiences
  - d. we will strive to increase our productivity and work to be ever more cost-effective
  - e. communicators should act as leaders – inspiring, confident and empowering
- 12.2 As ever, our communications will always be honest, open and in plain English.

## 13 Equalities

- 13.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that all people from different groups are not discriminated against or disadvantaged by our actions in any way.

- 13.2 All internal and external communications should use language that treats people with the respect they deserve, be non-discriminatory and accessible to a wide audience. Plain English should be used at all times.
- 13.3 It means the Council must also consider the ways in which people want to access information and engage with the Council. Although the use of digital channels are increasing, and will continue to do so, there remains a significant number of people in Charnwood who still do not have access to the internet and therefore printed materials will still be required.
- 13.4 Around 12 per cent of people in Leicestershire and Rutland have never been online or used the internet directly according to the Internet Access Quarterly Update, Office for National Statistics.
- 13.5 The Council's corporate website should be accessible to people with disabilities. This work will be picked up through the drive to achieve a four-star rating with Socitm.
- 13.6 The Council will continue to offer translations and interpreters under its Interpreting and Translation Policy.

Prepared by Mike Roberts, Communications Officer, December 2016

## Communications Strategy 2016-20 Action Plan

Below is a table of the planned tactics to achieve the objectives and overall aim, including targets, how it can be measured and its impact. It is not an exhaustive list as more campaigns will be identified during the four-year period.

1. Grow the Council's own audiences using digital channels, in particular social media					
	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsibility	Impact
1.1	Continue to grow social media audiences	Ongoing	Target to have 12,000 followers on Twitter and 2,000 likes on Facebook by 2020	Communications Manager	Direct communication with customers, peers, stakeholders which can pass on key information, messages, enhance reputation, build trust and engage in two-way conversations
1.2	Develop more engaging social media content such as video to explain Council priorities, get across key information to customers and stakeholders	Ongoing	Social media and digital analytics to gauge viewing figures as well as taking on board customer feedback	Communications Manager	Greater impact and engagement with customers regarding Council campaigns, information, key messages
1.3	Secure senior management buy-in of the use of social media to develop networks with members / peers / customers / stakeholders	February 2017	) Number of senior officers using social media as individuals ) Analytics of reach / followers etc	Communications Manager	Show leadership within the organisation of the benefits of social media and direct communications with customers and stakeholders
1.4	Support the creation of team social media accounts to interact with customers and peers building in governance and best practice	Ongoing	) Number of accounts created ) Customer feedback ) Staff feedback	Communications Manager	Enable teams to talk directly to their customers and promote their services and good work to them and peers
1.5	Guidelines introduced for social media usage by staff	February 2017	Guidelines completed	Communications Manager	Give clear guidance to staff using and wanting to use social media
1.6	Staff having access to a basic	September	Workshop introduced	Communications	Supporting colleagues' use of social

Charnwood Borough Council Communications Strategy 2017-2021

	social media skills workshop session developed in-house	2017		Manager	media Minimising risks of incidents which could potentially damage reputation
1.7	Members to be offered a social media workshop to improve skills and support developing their own digital channels	June 2017	Workshop in place	Communications Manager	Provide support to members already using social media Help members get on social media and connect with residents and potentially a younger demographic
1.8	Encourage more members to use social media	Jan 2017 – Dec 2018	By 2018 to have 47 members with active social media profiles	Communications Manager	Improve council's community digital networks Support members' ward work
1.9	Trial live streaming of Council and Cabinet meetings on social media	September 2017 – March 2018	Six meetings streamed and feedback from members, staff and customers	Communications Manager	Improves the openness and transparency of the democratic process and creates content
1.10	Establish a monthly Charnwood Borough Council e-newsletter for residents (an e-Charnwood News)	January 2018	Number of subscribers. Aim to have 3,000 by 2020 and monitor levels of interaction ie feedback, link clicks, interaction with campaigns (ie response to campaigns, promotions)	Communications Manager	Council can pass information / key messages directly to customers; measure impact, gain views and feedback.  ) There are cost implications. The more subscribers we have then we will have to pay for a subscription or software.
1.11	Support services in the development of their own e-newsletters for their customers / stakeholders (for example –the Markets team)	Ongoing	Number of subscribers and levels of interaction, link clicks, interaction with campaigns	Communications Manager	Better relationships with customers and improve two-way communications

<b>2. Deliver a first-class media management service</b>					
	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact
2.1	Continue to provide a proactive approach to Council news and supply the local media with ready to use copy, pictures and video. More focussed selling-in of stories is to be encouraged and the development of relationships with key journalists (print, radio, TV)	Ongoing	90 per cent of all press releases used by the media (tracked annually) 95 per cent positive or neutral tone of coverage	Communications Manager	Key messages reaching a wide audience, reputation enhanced and protected
2.2	Continue to monitor the media for reputation issues and take action if necessary as well as scan the horizon for potential issues (Action Plan 2.2)	Ongoing	Percentage of negative coverage – target is below 5	Communications Manager	Reputation of Council protected Customers can trust what the council says
2.3	Improve media monitoring to include local media’s websites and social media coverage as their audiences are becoming more and more significant. Smaller publications will also be monitored to give a better overall picture, particularly in the rural areas. It will include a refreshed Media Briefing.	April 2017	New system in place	Communications Manager	Better understanding of audience reach
2.4	Secure four pieces of TV coverage a year from proactive media work and selling in of stories.	Ongoing	Recorded in media monitoring and tracked annually	Communications Manager	Reach a wider audience, raise the borough’s profile

<b>3. Continue to use and develop key print publications to help reach a wider audience, particularly those without internet access.</b>					
	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact
3.1	Continue to produce three copies of Charnwood News	Ongoing	Three issues produced and distributed each year	Communications Manager	Reaches wide audience and offers best option to reach people without internet access.
3.2	Continue to produce four issues of Your Homes Matter per year	Ongoing	Four issues produced and distributed each year	Communications Manager	Supplies news and information to tenants
3.3	Refresh the design and content of Charnwood News following customer feedback	September 2017 – March 2018	New-look magazine produced Positive customer feedback	Communications Manager	An improved product for customers
3.4	Refresh the design and content of Your Homes Matter following customer feedback	September 2017 – March 2018	New-look magazine produced Positive customer feedback	Communications Manager	An improved product for customers
3.5	Assess the demand, potential and any resources needed for an e-newsletter version of Your Homes Matter to provide an alternative format for tenants	March 2018	Assessment produced	Communications Manager	Reach more tenants by offering a truly digital format

<b>4. Execute four key campaigns each year which support the Corporate Plan and are properly evaluated to measure success</b>					
	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact
4.1	Don't Muck Around Campaign and Awards <i>Corp Plan theme – Strong and Lasting Economy</i>	Autumn 2017	Service area's monitoring of littering/dog fouling/fly-tipping Media coverage Social media interaction DMA award entries	Communications Manager	Reduce littering/dog fouling /fly-tipping Enhance Council reputation Recognising efforts of Community groups

			numbers		
4.2	2017 Residents' Survey <i>Corp Plan theme – Delivering Excellent Services</i>	June 2017	Number of responses Media coverage Social media interaction Return on investment	Communications Manager	Quality feedback from residents on how services are working for them to inform future policies
4.3	Sign up for a Council online account <i>Corp Plan theme – Delivering Excellent Services</i>	Summer 2017	Number of customers who sign up Media coverage Social media interaction	Communications Manager	Better service to customers Increase use of online services Reduced number of phone calls
4.4	Recycle the Right Way – campaign to reduce contamination in recycling	February 2017	Contamination levels over the next six months Media coverage Social media interaction	Communications Manager	Cost savings if contamination levels drop

**5 Ensure the web content is well-managed, easy-to-read and highly-rated by any independent assessment**

	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact
5.1	Developing the Council's website content in order to help achieve Socitm four star rating and maintain it. (four stars will depend on developments beyond the Communications Team's remit ie e-forms/mobile rendering)	Ongoing	Socitm four star rating by 2018 including a high accessibility scoring for people with disabilities	Communications Manager	Improved online experience for customers
5.2	Work with ICS and web unity partners to develop the look and usability of the website, particularly as more traffic is mobile based.	Ongoing	Govmetric ratings, customer feedback and Socitm rating	Communications Manager	A better user experience for people

<b>6 Continue to develop internal communications channels to meet the needs of the organisation and support staff engagement</b>					
	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact
6.1	Annual briefings for staff, led by SMT, to update them on performance and issues affecting the whole organisation, led by SMT - (follows positive feedback from Internal Communications Survey 2016)	Sept 2017	Attendance and feedback	Communications Manager	A more engaged workforce
6.2	Support the delivery and content management of a first class intranet where staff can access information, share content, news and views.	Ongoing	Usage and feedback	Communications Manager	Easier to share information and views
6.3	Introduce quarterly features in One Charnwood summarising the quarterly performance reports	April 2017	Views / feedback	Communications Manager	Raise awareness of the Council's corporate targets and celebrate successes
6.4	Refresh the design of One Charnwood.	August 2017	Usage and feedback	Communications Manager	A more updated product
6.5	Investigate and cost out introducing a "proper" e-newsletter version of One Charnwood which renders to suit mobile devices and desktops to meet the demands of an ever-increasing mobile workforce.	January 2018	Assessment produced	Communications Manager	A more modern, responsive platform for internal communications that could share and collect information and views.
6.6	Develop a separate Internal Communications Strategy	January 2019	Strategy produced	Communications Manager	Improved internal communications which are even more closely aligned with business objectives

**References**

Government Communication Service: Communication Plan 2016/17  
Government Communication Service: The IC Space (internal Communications)  
Government Communication Service: Modern Communications Operating Model  
Charnwood Borough Council Residents' Survey 2015  
BDO Local Government Social Media Survey 2015  
Ofcom Communications Market Report 2016  
CBC Internal Communications Survey 2016

**Review Date:**

April 2018 by Communications Manager

# Charnwood Borough Council

## Consultations Briefing Note

### 1. Purpose

This is a short briefing note to share with officers some advice received about consultations and customer surveys, the channels we have available to promote them and consultation principles used by Central Government.

### 2. Background

Towards the end of 2016, some Members had expressed concern about the response rates to some consultations carried out by the council.

With that in mind, advice was sought from a market research company which has previously carried out work for the Council.

The company was asked to provide guidance on:

- ) Response rates / sample sizes
- ) The weighting which can be given to responses

We have also looked at Government guidance and consider the channels available to the council to promote consultations.

A certain amount of realism also needs to be factored in. Getting people to complete consultations or questionnaires is not easy, particularly if the topic is complicated or has no significant direct impact upon them.

### 3. Government guidance

The Government says consultations should:

- ) be clear and concise
- ) have a purpose
- ) be informative
- ) are only part of a process of engagement
- ) last for a proportionate amount of time should be targeted
- ) take account of the groups being consulted
- ) be agreed before publication
- ) should facilitate scrutiny

It also says:

- ) Government responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion
- ) Consultation exercises should not generally be launched during local or national election periods

More detail about the principles is in appendix 2.

#### 4. Why consult?

As the Government principles state, consultations should have a purpose. Some consultations we undertake are statutory, but others are not. Don't consult for the sake of it. Be clear on what will happen to the results of any consultation and how they will be used.

There are also two other issues to consider for consultations.

1. Do you want to give people the opportunity to comment?
2. Do you want to know what your target audience thinks?

They are two different issues because even if a large number of people respond to a survey, it doesn't necessarily mean that's what the majority of people think.

According to the market research company, to understand what your audience thinks, you need a **random** sample of people and not a large number of responses from people who are motivated or encouraged to respond (ie if the issue is contentious)

To understand what your audience thinks, you also need to choose a sample size, this [calculation tool](#) on the intranet can help, and choose a confidence level and a margin of error level. Common standards used by researchers are 95% (confidence level) and 5% (margin of error). More detail is in appendix one, but using these figures means the sample size does not vary vastly.

The table below indicates the difference in sample sizes required for different audience sizes.

Total audience	Confidence level	Margin of error	Random sample size
500 people	95%	5%	218
5,000 people	95%	5%	357
150,000 people	95%	5%	384
1,000,000 people	95%	5%	384

If your purpose is to find out what your audience thinks on an issue and you believe a random sample is best for you, first consider who your audience is, the size of it and then you can work out how many responses you need.

Is your audience:

- all residents
- customers of one service
- all staff
- young people
- old people
- people in one part of the borough?

Getting a random sample clearly has an implication on resources. The market research company estimates that the cost of surveying 384 random people would be around £7,500 depending upon the complexity of the survey.

## **5. Making sure people can access a consultation and are aware**

Most surveys are carried out online and the Council has a corporate, paid-for Survey Monkey account which any service can use – talk to the Communications Team.

Paper copies are usually made available upon request.

The method of consultation will depend on your audience. With smaller audiences, talking to customers direct may be the best way to glean information and feedback.

## **6. Channels available to promote consultations**

The following channels should be considered to raise awareness of consultations and surveys.

- Council website
- Social media – Council corporate accounts / team accounts
- Internal – Staff newsletter / intranet
- Members (who have lots of community contacts)
- Local media
- Advertising
- Does your service have a database of people who would be interested in the consultation and who we could contact?
- Ask other organisations to share if relevant to them, for example parish councils, partners and community groups

For further information and advice, talk to the Communications Team.

Below is the advice from the market research company and the Government's consultation principles. The [sample size toolkit](#) can be found on the intranet.

## Appendix 1



### ***What is a sample size?***

The number of completed responses your survey receives is your sample size. It's called a sample because it only represents part of the group of people (or population) whose opinions or behavior you care about. As an example, one way of sampling is to use a so-called "Random Sample," where respondents are chosen entirely by chance from the population at large.

### ***Understanding sample sizes***

Here are a few key terms to calculate your sample size and give it context:

Population size: The total number of people in the group you are trying to reach with your survey is called your population size. If you were taking a random sample of people across Charnwood, then your population size would be about 176 thousand. Similarly, if you are surveying your organisation, the size of the population is the total number of employees.

Census: a survey of everyone in the population

Margin of error: A percentage that describes how closely the answer your sample gave is to the "true value" is in your population. The smaller the margin of error is, the closer you are to having the exact answer at a given confidence level.

Confidence level: A measure of how certain you are that your sample accurately reflects the population, within its margin of error. Common standards used by researchers are 90%, 95%, and 99%.

For example if you stir a soup well (random sample) and you were to taste 100 spoons from a bowl of soup, 95 spoons would taste **more or less the same** while 5 spoons would taste differently. "More or less the same" stands for the confidence interval.

As another example, say you need to decide between two different names for your new product. By your estimates there are 400,000 potential customers

in your target market. If you decide that the industry standard of 3% margin of error at a 95% confidence level is appropriate, then you will need to get 1065 completed surveys.

***What sample size do I need for my survey?***

The sample size you might want for a survey or consultation depends on how reliable you need the results to be (what margin of error you are satisfied with), the overall size of the population and whether you need to be able to break the results down into sub-groups. For example, if you needed to look at some survey results by age group, then your population becomes the age group you are interested in, not the overall population of the district.

The spreadsheet tool provided will help you identify the sample size you need for your particular survey or consultation, based on the margin of error and confidence you are happy to work with. A recommended default would be a 5% confidence interval (margin of error) with a 95% level of confidence. If you achieved the recommended sample size on that basis, then you are in effect saying *“We are 95% confident that the results for the whole population are within plus or minus 5% of the results we get from our sample”*.

Once you get to a certain sample size, the marginal benefit of additional respondents is very limited and will not affect the overall strength of your analysis. For example, using the same defaults as above, a sample size of around 384 would give you the confidence you need, regardless of whether the population is 1,000 or 1,000,000. This is worth bearing in mind when planning the level of resource you need for a consultation; time and money spent getting respondents above your desired sample size could be wasted.

## Appendix 2

### Government Consultation Principles 2016

#### **A. Consultations should be clear and concise**

Use plain English and avoid acronyms. Be clear what questions you are asking and limit the number of questions to those that are necessary. Make them easy to understand and easy to answer. Avoid lengthy documents when possible and consider merging those on related topics.

#### **B. Consultations should have a purpose**

Do not consult for the sake of it. Ask departmental lawyers whether you have a legal duty to consult. Take consultation responses into account when taking policy forward. Consult about policies or implementation plans when the development of the policies or plans is at a formative stage. Do not ask questions about issues on which you already have a final view.

#### **C. Consultations should be informative**

Give enough information to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses. Include validated assessments of the costs and benefits of the options being considered when possible; this might be required where proposals have an impact on business or the voluntary sector.

#### **D. Consultations are only part of a process of engagement**

Consider whether informal iterative consultation is appropriate, using new digital tools and open, collaborative approaches. Consultation is not just about formal documents and responses. It is an on-going process.

#### **E. Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time**

Judge the length of the consultation on the basis of legal advice and taking into account the nature and impact of the proposal. Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay policy development. Consulting too quickly will not give enough time for consideration and will reduce the quality of responses.

#### **F. Consultations should be targeted**

Consider the full range of people, business and voluntary bodies affected by the policy, and whether representative groups exist. Consider targeting specific groups if appropriate. Ensure they are aware of the consultation and can access it. Consider how to tailor consultation to the needs and preferences of particular groups, such as older people, younger people or people with disabilities that may not respond to traditional consultation methods.

#### **G. Consultations should take account of the groups being consulted**

Consult stakeholders in a way that suits them. Charities may need more time to respond than businesses, for example. When the consultation

spans all or part of a holiday period, consider how this may affect consultation and take appropriate mitigating action.

**H. Consultations should be agreed before publication**

Seek collective agreement before publishing a written consultation, particularly when consulting on new policy proposals. Consultations should be published on gov.uk.

**I. Consultation should facilitate scrutiny**

Publish any response on the same page on gov.uk as the original consultation, and ensure it is clear when the government has responded to the consultation. Explain the responses that have been received from consultees and how these have informed the policy. State how many responses have been received.

**J. Government responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion**

Publish responses within 12 weeks of the consultation or provide an explanation why this is not possible. Where consultation concerns a statutory instrument publish responses before or at the same time as the instrument is laid, except in exceptional circumstances. Allow appropriate time between closing the consultation and implementing policy or legislation.

**K. Consultation exercises should not generally be launched during local or national election periods.**

If exceptional circumstances make a consultation absolutely essential (for example, for safeguarding public health), departments should seek advice from the Propriety and Ethics team in the Cabinet Office.

This document does not have legal force and is subject to statutory and other legal requirements.