'SHARE THIS'

Corporate Communications Strategy 2013 – 2014

TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH | BWRDEISTREF SIROL TORFAEN

Supportive, fair, effective

Contents

Introduction

"Torfaen County Borough Council recognises the importance of effective communications and engagement in the delivery of its services to the community and how they underpin the council's values of being:

- supportive
- fair
- effective.

Communication is a two-way process and the council is committed to maintaining and encouraging regular dialogue with residents and stakeholders so that information and ideas are exchanged both inside and outside of the organisation.

The council believes that residents, partners, businesses and visitors should all be well informed and regularly consulted – so they can influence the quality and nature of the services available to them.

Government targets are constantly being assessed to ensure local people can engage with their council in new and better ways, utilising the latest technology. Torfaen Council is committed to finding ways to widen people's choices, and tailoring our services to people's preferred means of communication.

We recognise that for a successful joint working relationship between partners, public sector and the private sector, staff and councillors we need to provide them with access to a wide range of information. An important aspect of our communications is to raise local awareness of the services we provide to encourage full use of them by our residents.

The council has developed a wide range of accessible communication channels and contact points so residents can keep in touch with us, 24 hours a day. We are constantly seeking to expand and improve these services even further."

Alison Ward
Chief Executive Officer

Context

Communication plays a vital role in local government ensuring that citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities, in helping keep some of the most vulnerable in our society safe, and in delivering policy aims through information. These are some of the most interesting and important communication challenges.

The changing local government landscape has created new challenges. Central government messages are preparing residents for further cuts which local government will shoulder. The pressure on council budgets will bring a period of unprecedented change and difficult choices over which services are protected, which are cut and which are delivered differently.

Citizens may consume services differently and communications will aim to help citizens and services in their preferred choice of communication while supporting with channel shift and a digital by default agenda. During this period testing resident perceptions, satisfying regulators and regularly engaging with citizens will be vital.

Successful communication programmes in local government are developed strategically, with detailed planning that provides a clear focus on the target audience and enables effective organisation of resources to maximise outcomes.

The Communication strategy takes a holistic view of how all communication activities and campaigns should dovetail, particularly where there are overlapping audiences and a range of potential channels to reach those audiences.

Budgets for communications often sit within service areas and activities can develop in isolation which acts as a barrier to collaboration.

Improving internal and external collaboration means we can be more confident that we are extracting the maximum value from every pound spent on communications.

The media environment is changing

The council communicates with almost every citizen in the borough about a wide and complex range of issues, but does not do so in a vacuum. Understanding the broader media landscape in which we operate helps us to choose the right channels and the right message to communicate cost-effectively.

We are operating against a fast changing backdrop:

- Digital TV and broadband access at home are now the norm
- 45 % of viewing is now of non-terrestrial channels, three times more than ITV1
- Half of homes now have some form of personal digital TV recorder
- Newspaper sales continue to decline, but the growth of online versions means that some content – often entertainment-related news stories – can reach more people than ever before
- Social media channels are playing an ever-greater role in spreading news and opinion
- Internet advertising spend continues to grow rapidly, accounting for 30 % of all media spend last year (a bigger share than any other medium)

Nevertheless, people generally access the media for the same reasons as they always have, for information and entertainment. It is the medium through which this content is provided, the speed at which it is delivered and the opportunity to personalise the experience that have changed.
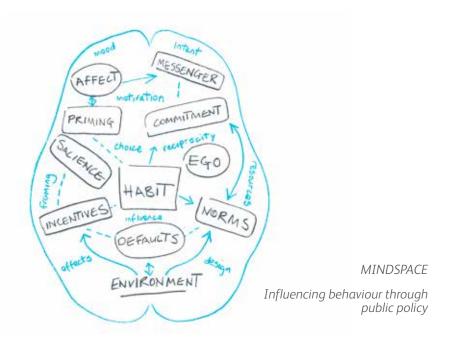
The council can take greater advantage of the efficiencies that better targeting of communication through digital channels can bring. But this is not just about a channel shift to digital. The council will always be unique in terms of the breadth of the audiences with which it needs to communicate and many of these audiences are not at the cutting edge of technology or social trends. The continued ambition must be to develop real insight into the full range of audiences and the capability to use the most effective ways to reach and engage them.

The council will continue to shift from a static or traditional use of channels to one that reflects the reality of people's lives, preferences and influences.

The use of behavioural insight within communications strategies is already well established and has paid dividends, for example in the social marketing campaigns on public health issues such as smoking.   This needs to be extended into council services to ensure that what we do draws on a clear understanding of people's behaviour and is fully integrated with a variety of strategies and approaches beyond communications. The Institute of Government use the **MINDSPACE** model:

- **Messenger** - we are heavily influenced by who communicates information
- **Incentives** - our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts, such as strongly avoiding losses

- **Norms** - we are strongly influenced by what others do
- **Defaults** - we 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
- **Salience** - our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
- **Priming** - our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
- **Affect** - our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
- **Commitments** - we seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
- **Ego** - we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

MINDSPACE

Influencing behaviour through public policy

The growth of online media

The fragmentation of traditional media is being driven by social media. Traditional media is struggling with complex arguments due to shortage of space and have struggled to adjust their model. Journalists are using social media to look for news and news frequently breaks first on Twitter. Citizens are creating their own content using social media, blogging and hyper-local news is gaining popularity.

Social media is fast and personal which makes this the age of opinion with no council service or decision off menu. Social media is helping the rise of people power and resident activism, direct democracy and single issue campaigners placing the council under greater scrutiny than ever before.

Digital channels are used by the council to broadcast, listen, monitor and moderate – they are used to connect people, consult and engage and provide residents with a platform to make their views heard.

People spread information (eg. snow disruption) and residents are discussing council services on social media whether we like it or not. We have to be on top of the conversation by using case studies and evidence to encourage meaningful conversations without using corporate jargon . Social media should be used to recreate traditional encounters to share stories, build trust and social capital based on a currency of reputation.

Over 85 % of over 16s are using the internet and people are far more likely to leave a Facebook message than attend a meeting..

Social media is also saving money by replacing traditional advertising spending. It is fast, efficient and can be readily targeted at publicising jobs, events and planning notices.

- A SOCITM study in 2012 provided the cost of dealing with citizens.
- £8.62 for face-to-face
- £2.83 for telephone
- £0.15 for online

To make this a well networked council we need to work with services annually to identify critical communication workstreams from service plans. Services will be supported when moving from offline to more online channels and to keep policy up to speed with technology and abreast of new digital tools and techniques.

> **Over 85% of over 16s are using the internet and people are far more likely to leave a facebook message than attend a meeting.**

The importance of effective communication

This document sets out the council's strategy for improving communication with residents, partners, stakeholders and employees of Torfaen County Borough Council.

Effective and co-ordinated external communication is not possible without strong internal communication. This strategy therefore addresses both key areas.

The challenge for any local authority is to communicate its vision, role, priorities and values to stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally - and to provide channels through which those stakeholders can comment on and influence policies and services.

This is no easy task, particularly in a world where people have increasing control and choice about the way they access information.

Communication that is more effective can help achieve a better understanding of the:

- wide range of services and facilities provided
- use of resources, financial challenges and difficulties choices facing the council
- actions the council is taking and planning to improve the borough
- opportunities to engage with the council and the role people can play in influencing, shaping and working with the council on policy decisions.

Effective communication is not a task for communications specialists alone. Everyone involved in and connected with the council has a role to play - through what they say or do and how they say or do it. This requires a commitment from elected members, chief officers and staff to making good communications a priority.

Research shows that communication has a significant impact on how local residents judge their local council.

Ipsos MORI research has established that the less people know about an organisation, the less favourably they rate it in customer satisfaction surveys. In turn, well-informed residents are more likely to be satisfied with council services and to be supportive of its work. In order to engage with our residents we need to provide them with clear, concise information about specific issues that matter to them.

Recent MORI research conducted for the Local Government Association (LGA) shows satisfaction levels for local government have never been higher:

- 80% trust councils on services
- 10% trust central government
- Only 10% blame councils for cuts in services
- 85% satisfied with local area
- 65% trust their council
- 51% said council provides value for money
- Only 14% will accept less from their council to pay off the national debt

It is essential we understand resident beliefs and habits and have data to highlight and address resident misconceptions and perceptions.

Communications can help manage perceptions by:

- Leading on the clarity of purpose across the council and LSB
- Creating an authentic narrative agreed across the council and LSB
- Reminding the community the council is the only organisation which is democratically accountable and democratic responsible .
- Monitoring cohesion and engaging communities in decision making.

"Communication is a fundamental component in how local residents judge the overall image of their council. Getting it right is one of the simplest and most effective ways of improving satisfaction. It is no longer an optional extra – any council that wants to be seen as striving or high performing will need a communication strategy in place."

- IDeA, Connecting with Communities

Research shows that communication has a significant impact on how local residents judge their local council.

Purpose

This strategy aims to secure agreement and endorsement of the role of Corporate Communications as custodian of the Torfaen County Borough Council brand, together with communication priorities, and joint ownership of actions from Council services whose co-operation is necessary to deliver this strategy. The purpose of the communication strategy is to increase and maintain awareness of council services and functions, to improve local accountability and democracy, to listen and learn and to enable the council to explain the reasons for the policies and priorities. The strategy will support the work of the council's second corporate plan and Local Service Board priorities through timely, relevant, inclusive, clear, concise and consistent communication.

The strategy will:

- provide a link between corporate plan strategy and communications planning and delivery
- help explain to colleagues how communications supports service objectives, and which strategic choices have been taken and why
- build a common understanding of audiences and their communication preferences
- create continuity in communications activity over an extended period
- articulate objectives and measures of success when building a case for resources or evaluating performance
- anticipate and mitigate communications risks

The following can be expected as a result of the adoption and implementation of the council's revised communication strategy:

- Communication and public engagement becomes more prominent in the council's strategic and operational decision-making, ensuring citizens play a key role in shaping service delivery and policy direction.
- The collective ownership of communications and engagement is increased across the Council with performance against key priorities being proactively managed.
- The emphasis on communications and public engagement within service areas is enhanced and accountability is embedded within the Council's Leadership Team.
- The efficiency of the corporate communications service is improved and resources maximized.
- The council's communication's priorities are in-line with statutory duties, agreed corporate and service area priorities and have regard to local service board objectives.
- Communications and public engagement becomes integral to policy formation, key decisions, service improvement, team planning and is given the appropriate budget.
- The council's communication and public engagement activities are more robust and capable of withstanding external challenge due to improved measurement of activities and stakeholder insight.
- The council can more confidently demonstrate high levels of communication and engagement and in doing so explore and mitigate communication risks.
- The strategy addresses the variety of statutory powers listed above and follows guidance within the Local Government reputation campaign and the revised Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity in Wales.

Aims of the Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to endorse communication as a priority issue for the authority and achieve the following:

- Ensure Torfaen residents are well informed and have a high awareness of the council's services and how to access them
- Ensure Torfaen residents have a positive perception of the council and its services
- Demonstrate value for money
- Offer a range of communication channels, giving residents the choice of how to communicate with us
- Ensure the reputation of the organisation is enhanced locally, regionally and nationally
- Develop a well informed, engaged workforce enabled to deliver the best services possible.

Overall aim: The council's overarching communications objective is to involve local people in creating a better Torfaen and thereby protect and enhance the reputation of the council.

Setting Objectives

Communications objectives should be SMART and questions asked to help measure outcomes should include.

- What does success look like?
- How can our communications help ensure successful implementation of this project?
- How will hese objectives be measured in SMART terms?
- What are we hoping to achieve with these communications (informing, reinforcing, motivating, change, normalising, involving or instructing) ,
- Raising awareness is rarely a valid communication objective. Objectives will be devised to consider why awareness needs to be raised (inform, reinforce, motivate, normalise, involve etc).

The broad aims and objectives of this strategy will be translated into measurable targets, which are directly linked to our outcome statements:

Outcome1 - To increase stakeholder* satisfaction about how the Council communicates with them and satisfaction with council services (measured in resident's survey)

Outcome 2 - To improve internal communications and increase employee satisfaction in relation to communication and engagement (measured in staff survey)

Outcome 3 - To increase stakeholder awareness about what the Council does and the services it provides (measured in resident's survey)

Outcome 4 - To build the online community and increase the number of social media interactions (measured using social media analytical tools)

Outcome 5 - To increase brand recognition of the Council at a local, regional and national level (ensuring all publications follow corporate brand guidelines)

Outcome 6 - To generate positive media coverage (using Newsflash monitoring tool)

A number of tasks and outcomes critical to the success of this strategy have been set out in the communications team plan 2013/14. Achievement levels for targets will be benchmarked in 2013/14 through a series of audits, reviews and surveys.

*For the purposes of this document the term stakeholder encompasses residents, businesses, employees, councillors and visitors

Questions to provide benchmarks for performance indicators for stakeholder satisfaction:

- % of residents who trust their council
- % of residents who say the council keeps them informed about services
- % of residents who say the council keeps them informed on how it spends its money (council tax)
- % of residents who believe the council provides value for money
- % of residents who say the council keeps them informed on planned changes to services

Conducting regular surveys will provide the leadership team with regular intelligence and insight into the perceptions and behaviour of residents, elected members and staff. Providing A regular tracker will measure perception shifts on the main themes and activities of the council. It will also review the effectiveness of our communications and whether campaigns are making a demonstrable difference.

There is a range of factors which contribute to satisfaction. However, the figures will be used to show whether following the adoption of the communication strategy levels of satisfaction and stakeholder knowledge of the council increases or decreases.

Communication values and principles

In order to achieve these aims, the council is committed to ensuring all communication (whether internal or external) adheres to the following overarching principles.

Open - we will give honest, positive, evidence based messages and be open to debate and questions.

Timely - we will communicate with our audiences proactively when the messages are relevant to them

Customer focused - we will put the customer at the heart of everything we do and adhere to the standards of our Customer Care Strategy.

Jargon free - we will make sure the intended audience can understand our messages. We will avoid jargon unless it is suitable for those with whom we are communicating.

Accessible - we will adhere to accessibility standards we will offer an appropriate choice of communication methods in order not to disadvantage any members of our community. We will integrate social media with traditional channels and offer literature in a range of alternative formats.

Engaging - we will publish contact information on all communication we produce and encourage feedback and conversations in order to improve two-way communication.

Listening - we will proactively seek the opinions of our audiences, acknowledge

them and respond to them quickly, honestly and consistently.

Evaluate and measure - we will endeavour to measure the success of each of our communication channels, products and messages as appropriate and be open to change based on the results. Every campaign should be designed to achieve a specific set of outcomes, linked to corporate priorities and service plans.

Environmentally friendly - we will select communication methods, which are cost effective and environmentally responsible, using electronic methods where possible.

Value for money - we will make the best possible use of our resources and budgets by working with colleagues across the organisation and with partners. We will always advocate/prioritise the use of free communication channels such as digital and press releases, unless there is a sound business case for paid for marketing or advertising.

Clearly branded - we will ensure all communications adhere to the corporate style guidelines, aligning corporate strategy with vision, values and shared interests of residents. We will test our brand against the four A's of branding

- Alignment – are residents expectations are met?
- Authenticity – does the council acts in a way that is consistent with what it says?
- Advocacy – does the council advocates on behalf of residents interests and applies our expertise and adds value to society?
- Attachment – how much do residents connect emotionally with the council?

Consistent branding helps cement the relationship between the council and

the services we provide and residents pay for. We must maintain a consistent identity across all services. Avoiding new brands will reduce expenditure and increasing public awareness of council activity.

Integrated - council communications will form an integral part of the service planning process.

Planned - all communications activities to be undertaken as part of a robust planning process. Campaign planning with services will be based on ROSIE:

- research
- objectives
- strategy
- implementation
- evaluation

Annual Service Improvement Plans will be used with chief officers to determine communication priorities under corporate priorities and statutory services.

Legal - the Council will, at all times, comply with the Department of Communities and Local Government Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (Code of Conduct), other legislation and national and local protocols. Communications will always be politically impartial.

Equal and inclusive - we will not inappropriately favour one stakeholder over another and will ensure efforts are made to communicate with hard to reach groups. Older people will be engaged through the Older People's forum and Older People's Champion. Resources allowing, Communications will ensure efforts are made to adhere to the principles of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan ('Equality Promise') Diversity Policy and statutory expectations set by the

Welsh Government in relation to the promotion and protection of the Welsh Language. We will also consider low literacy levels and the functionally illiterate.

The in-house vision:

- communication activity delivered through partnerships if possible
- value for money evidenced through effective evaluation
- communicators who work transparently and adhere to guidance
- a team who deliver, and don't just procure
- digital channels prioritised where appropriate
- owned and earned channels used before paid-for media
- be honest, be brave and be human
- retain high caliber, multi-skilled employees

Role

The council uses communications to help deliver its policy priorities, based on the corporate plan, statutory duties and service area commitments.

Communication plays an important role in helping deliver public benefit, working together with policy and operational areas of the council.

The council has a responsibility to communicate with the public, and does so in a number of ways:

- To fulfill a specific legal or statutory requirement to provide public information about the operation of the council, such as public consultations, or notifications of changes to government services:
- To generate broad understanding of the council's work programme, by informing the public about the specific activities and priorities:
- To influence attitudes and behaviours that benefit individuals or wider society;
- To support the effective operation of services by, for example, facilitating take up of a service or programme, compliance with requirements of a service, or supporting users:

Further improvements can be achieved by:

- Strengthening central coordination for greater prioritisation and strategic planning of communications to ensure they are aligned to high-level government objectives;

- Maximising efficiency and value for money by, reducing duplication, striving for low or no cost approaches and systematically measuring impact and effectiveness;
- Increasing accountability and transparency, having a clearer plan, driving collective responsibility and improving joint working.

The central communications team is organised around core disciplines.

The main roles are categorised as:

- Press and media relations
- External communications - campaigns and service marketing
- Internal communications and elected member/employee engagement
- Design and Print
- Digital/online communications

Other roles and skillsexist but our work will focus on these strands of activity.

The role can be clustered into four distinct phases of activity:

1. **Insight** – gaining an accurate and deep understanding of the issue(s). Using insight to identify target audiences and partners and to inform communications objectives, messages and solutions;
2. **Ideas** – developing the communications strategy and plan. Selecting channels and developing key messages and content for target audiences. Identifying evaluation criteria;
3. **Implementation** – developing and implementing effective communication strategies and plans. Working with stakeholders and partners to deliver communication;
4. **Impact** – assessing the impact and effectiveness of communication. Reviewing the achievement of objectives. Identifying lessons learnt and sharing feedback.

The strategy recognises that all employees have a vital role to play in effectively communicating the council's values and vision. It recognises that all services have their own areas of expertise, and are ultimately responsible for delivering their own service plans. One of the communication team's key roles is to provide valuable support to these services, working with them to ensure their messages are effectively planned and executed.

Responsibility

Responsibility for the successful implementation of this strategy rests with the Chief Executive, Leadership Team, Leader of the Council, Elected Members and every employee.

The Leadership Team

- Responsible for driving the communications strategy by actively and demonstrably applying its principles to all aspects of their work
- Communicate their decisions, and the strategic thinking behind them clearly and quickly in order that the cascade of information to elected members and employees at all levels can be instigated (as appropriate) in an accurate and timely manner
- Support and champion good communication across the authority and help embed it into everything we do.

Heads of Service

- Play a key role in implementing the strategy and ensuring it is embedded in their day-to-day activity
- Ensure all their staff are aware of the communications strategy and functions of the communications team.

Managers and Supervisors

- Communicate regularly with their teams, ensuring a climate, which encourages feedback, and open discussion
- Run team meetings/briefings at least once a month to cascade key organisational information and engage team to seek views and feedback.

All Employees

- To make themselves aware of what is going on in their immediate area as well as familiarising themselves with some of the key strategic issues.
- To recognise that good communication is key to their every day work and that they play important roles as ambassadors for the council.

Corporate Communications Team

- Lead on communication and marketing across the authority and take responsibility for implementing the Communication Strategy and delivering activities within the team plan
- Ensure that communication with public, media, branding and publications are cohesive and present a one organisation approach
- Effectively market the council's brand, values and corporate identity
- Provide focused communications expertise
- Monitor and evaluate progress and performance.

Reputation

There is no simple blueprint for high quality reputation. Reputation is the biggest asset an organisation or individual has. Reputation takes time to acquire and can be irreparably damaged overnight by a poorly handled issue or crisis. If communication is poor or reputation is neglected, all other achievements fall by the wayside.

Reputations are built by a combination of what you do, what you say about yourself and what others say about you. A good reputation also affects staff attitudes and behaviour.

It is the role of the corporate communications team to protect the council's reputation and positively influence external and internal stakeholder perceptions.

However, there are several identified key reputation drivers. The Local Government Association's Reputation Campaign (published in July 2006 and May 2010) carried out research into how local government organisations are perceived by the public. Twelve core actions were identified which would improve public perceptions, five of which were directly linked to communication and are now delivered:-

- Manage the media effectively to promote and defend the council
- Produce an A-Z guide of council services
- Publish a regular council magazine or newspaper to inform residents
- Ensure the council brand is consistently linked to services
- Good internal communications – make sure that staff and elected members are well informed.

The 2010 research does not publish the list of core actions but identified three big issues and five rules for reputation.

The big issues are:

- **Leadership:** Having clarity about what the council stands for and making sure it is understood by the whole organisation.
- **Brand**: having a clear sense of purpose and believing and living our values as a supportive, fair and effective organisation.
- **Strategic Communications:** having the right skills to improve reputation.

These issues need to be addressed in the context of meeting the expectations and managing the perceptions of the people we serve by addressing five core challenges.

1. Proving we provide value for money
2. Ensuring that communications always informs and engages residents and staff
3. Building trust and confidence in what we do across all audiences
4. Working to improve services and showing we are doing so
5. And in all communications focusing on changing lives for the better.

The research highlighted the need for excellent communication across all audiences in order for the organisation to be valued by its communities. Communication therefore has a direct link with customer satisfaction.

The Council's Key Messages

The council's key priorities are contained in its second corporate plan and serve as a focus for communications activity and key messages. Corporate Plan 2 is the key strategy document that will guide how the council delivers its services over the next five years.

Corporate Plan 2 will focus the council's resources on providing support for Torfaen's most vulnerable citizens and communities.

It sets out the **seven** areas the council believes will improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, works and visits Torfaen. These priorities recognise the challenges facing Torfaen residents as a consequence of the severe cutbacks in public services expenditure, the cuts in benefits and the potential of escalating unemployment.

The seven priorities are:

1. Supporting families and children living in poverty to get through the recession
2. Preventing Torfaen residents becoming homeless
3. Safeguarding children, especially those with additional (special) educational needs and supporting positive attitudes towards education
4. Protecting the most vulnerable adults and supporting those with disabilities and other long-term conditions
5. Targeting support to deprived communities and families suffering from crime and anti-social behaviour
6. Using resources wisely, to include maintaining the highway infrastructure and reducing energy consumption and waste

7. Supporting initiatives which generate employment and training for work opportunities

In addition, it is important to communicate the key differences between the council and other organisations, most notably that:

- It is democratic and accountable – run for the people by elected representatives of the people;
- It is leading the borough – providing community leadership;
- It is committed to spending public money wisely and efficiently;
- It is committed to working with public, private, business, voluntary and community sector partners – locally, regionally and nationally.

Where necessary the communications team will develop similar model of working with the Torfaen Local Service Board and activity of the Public Services Support Unit to ensure deliberate, consistent and coordinated messages to achieve the following:

- Torfaen has a healthy population with a good quality of life
- People in Torfaen are safe
- People in Torfaen are educated for life
- People in Torfaen enjoy a prosperous economy
- People in Torfaen live in quality affordable homes
- People in Torfaen live in clean, green, sustainable communities
- Frail people in Torfaen are happily independent.

Communication channels and audiences

	Team Meetings	Webcasting	Torfaen Talks Talks	Swoop, Peter's Blog Yammer, etc	Online Induction	Employee Survey	Comms Training	Media Relations	The Word from the LeadershipTeam	The Word - Word on the street	Email	Social media, youtube, FB and twitter	Torfaen Website and other council sites	Consultation and Engagement	Torfaen People's Panel	Torfaen Business Voice	Public Meetings / forums	Trade Press	Smartphone App
Employees	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					●
Elected Members		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●		●
Residents		●	●					●			●	●	●	●	●		●		●
Potential employees		●	●					●				●	●	●	●		●	●	●
The media		●	●					●				●	●	●	●		●		●
Partners		●	●				●	●			●	●	●	●	●		●		●
Community and voluntary groups		●	●					●				●	●	●	●		●		●
The business community		●	●					●			●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Potential inward investors								●					●			●		●	●
National opinion formers / unions								●					●					●	●

Target Audiences

It is essential to identify the relevant audiences we communicate with in order to deliver the most relevant messages in the most appropriate way.

Each individual will have different needs and expectations of their interaction with Torfaen County Borough Council. We will therefore use as many channels of communication as appropriate to reach as many people as we can.

Our main audiences broadly include:-

- Residents
- Employees
- Elected Members
- Media
- Partners
- Businesses
- Regulators
- National opinion formers and Trade Unions

The council currently uses a wide variety of methods to communicate with various stakeholders. Although there is a growth in digital channels these compliment offline channels to ensure a broad audience can be reached.

Equality and Diversity

The strategy will adhere to the principles contained within the Council's Strategic Equality Plan ('Equality Promise') that the Council has been required to produce as a public sector body under the Equality Act 2010.

- Torfaen County Borough Council will work in a way that is inclusive and provides equality of opportunity and involvement from all sectors regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, social status or geographical location.
- We will establish effective ways of communicating, using and developing wherever possible, common structures and processes so that there are ways for all groups and interests to have a voice.

Performance Management

The Leadership Team will review the strategy annually. The communications team plan will be regularly reviewed by the service improvement team to monitor progress against targets and outcomes. The communications team will measure its success in delivering focused communications expertise through set targets (see local performance indicators under Key Targets and Objectives).

Interdependencies

This strategy is interdependent with tiers of government and the Torfaen local service board. Changes of policy or priority at government level or local public service level can change our own communications priorities and strategy.

Our strategy will aim to identify and mitigate against potential duplication and identify synergies for collaboration and efficient use of resources.

Risks and assumptions

To achieve the objectives of the communications strategy, there is certain to be an element of future risk. These may be associated with:

- unknowable reactions from stakeholders or other audiences;
- unknown costs of communication options within the strategy
- the evolving nature of policy
- resources

Due to government austerity measures, the likelihood and impact of future fragmentation or reorganisation of public services, local government or key council services is difficult to predict. These risks will be considered alongside our strategic approach and key changes or risks can be mitigated against as they are announced.

References

Local Government Publicity Code of Conduct for Wales
LGA New Reputation Guide
Customer Care Strategy
Corporate Standards
Strategic Equality Plan ('Equality Promise')
Dignity at Work Policy
Welsh Language Policy/Standard
SRS Strategy

HOW THE COUNCIL COMMUNICATES

INFORM

Campaigns to influence, inform and change behaviour

crisis communications, media relations (local, national, specialist), campaign planning, media training, pr strategy, press releases, copywriting

TRUST

VALUE FOR MONEY

Our Corporate Plan – bring to life the council's priorities

TRANSPARENCY

roadshows, launches, ceremonies, public events, speechwriting

IMPROVE LIVES

Public information – changes to services

EDUCATE

News and policy, key decisions and announcements

PROTECT REPUTATION

branding, video, photography, audio, torfaen talks, newsletters, leaflets, banners, advertising, marketing materials, posters, animation

ENGAGE

Activities that support internal and external engagement

torfaen website, intranet, service and partner sites, e-bulletins, facebook, twitter, youtube, flickr, yammer

Statutory and legal information

CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

Events and activities

the word, swoop (intranet), noticeboards, cascade briefings, events, roadshows, ask alison, yammer, e-mail, staff engagement

SUPPORT FOR SERVICES

Research · Print & Design · Objectives · Web & Social Media · Strategy · Internal Comms · Events · Implementation · Public Relations (PR) · Evaluation

Engagement · Feedback · Purpose · Vision · Right tools

Audiences