

Communications Strategy and 2018-2020 Campaign Plan

Vision for Swindon

#SwindonFuture

Quality of life

Lifelong learning

Prosperity

Modern town centre

Opportunities New homes

Thriving businesses

Investment

New jobs



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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TOWN CENTRE SHOWCASE

Free event

Visit the Central Library to see Swindon Borough Council's plans to regenerate the town centre.

Take a look at the spectacular model of the town centre, chat to experts on Thursday and Friday plus see our plans for current projects.

thurs.
20 July 11 - 5

fri.
21 July 10 - 5

sat.
22 July 10 - 4*

sun.
23 July 11 - 3*

* plans only



'I don't have time to be ill'

Adele Santaniello
Business Support Administrator

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www.swindon.gov.uk/fostering6




Staff Survey
6 - 20 September 2017

Quick and easy
You can complete during work time
Responses are anonymous
We want to hear your feedback

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Check the intranet home page for more details
If you do not have access to the intranet, speak to your line manager



Foreword

Cllr David Renard



Swindon is well placed to create wealth, jobs, housing and new opportunities over the next decade to benefit current and future residents and their families. The Council has a significant role to play through the continued delivery of our vision for Swindon, which includes securing investment in new homes, schools, roads and town centre improvements.

We relentlessly champion and fight Swindon's corner on the local, regional and national stage, working with partners to help Swindon compete for external funding and investment.

In today's complex and uncertain world, telling the Council's story simply, effectively and truthfully has never been more important. Communications has an important part to play in achieving our vision, giving residents a clear and coherent picture of what we're delivering and why it matters to them and the borough's future. Explaining how the different pieces of the jigsaw add up to ensure Swindon continues to thrive and benefit from well-managed growth.

How, for example, investing now to increase the capacity of our road network will support new housing development and Swindon's growing population.

At the same time, it is crucial that we continue to modernise and deliver our services to residents as efficiently and effectively as possible, to live within our means and prioritise the services needed to support our vulnerable children and adults. In this document we distil this into a three-sentence corporate narrative that explains the Council's role serving more than 217,000 residents.

This strategy will form the basis of all our communications activity over the next two years. It sets out our commitment to strategic communications: delivering evidence-based campaigns with clear objectives that make a measurable difference to council priorities.



Councillor David Renard

Leader of Swindon Borough Council

Introduction

Sam Mowbray



Swindon Borough Council is responsible for delivering hundreds of services that impact on the quality of life of all Swindon's residents. We know from our most recent survey (November 2017) that residents are interested in what we do: 80% are keen to know about council services and the benefits we provide. Indeed, some of our social media posts generate tens of thousands of impressions.

Our aim through this strategy is to prioritise professional communications resource where it can deliver measureable outcomes in support of council priorities.

Good communications helps to increase how informed and engaged residents feel in the work of the Council which, in turn, is proven to improve overall trust and satisfaction levels.

Over the past year we have made good progress in demonstrating the value of well-planned, evidence-based strategic communications. This included the successful campaign that supported the voter ID pilot in Swindon in the May 2018 local elections (see case study Annex A).

We are increasingly harnessing the power of social media to reach many of our residents.

Most of our 2,800 staff are residents of the borough, so it's crucial that we engage and inspire them to champion and take pride in the work they do serving Swindon.

We are focussed on modernising how we deliver services at pace, which again requires good communications so our staff and residents are fully engaged on this journey.

In January 2018 we invited the Local Government Association to carry out a Communications Peer Review and the recommendations have informed this strategy.

Sam Mowbray

Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications

The context in which we operate

The Council exists to serve the residents of Swindon, demonstrating:

- What it is doing for local people and the borough as a whole
- Why it matters to you and your family
- How it can help you and your family

Over the past decade, how councils serve their communities and place has changed significantly.

The profile of *what* services are delivered by local authorities, and *how* they deliver them, continues to evolve.

At the same time, here in Swindon, the Council is three years into delivering an ambitious vision for Swindon by 2030. This is laying the foundations to secure the best possible quality of life for our existing and future residents.

In order to achieve the priorities and pledges that underpin the vision, we are working with partners across the public and private sector to unlock new sources of funding and attract investment into the borough.

We are bold in our ambitions for Swindon, but need to set and manage realistic expectations around the timescales needed to progress some of our plans, given their complexity, our finite resources and the impact of external factors (e.g. the economic outlook and commercial investment decisions).

The Council is also competing for residents' attention to explain and engage them in what it is doing to serve them and their families.

That's why it's important we have a clear and compelling narrative that communicates to residents on their terms.

Objectives of this strategy

As the Westco Commission's *The Future of Public Service Communications: From Theory to Practice* report¹ (2016) made clear:

“ *Councils, like other public institutions, need to demonstrate they are a force for good in their local communities. In order to do this, they need to focus on improving their reputation with communities, providing positive customer experiences and clear improvements to the lives of their residents. This is no small ask whilst transforming how services are delivered.* ”

The extent to which residents feel informed and engaged by their council, and the trust they place in them, directly affects their views about their council and the services they receive. This in turn impacts on their levels of satisfaction and ultimately, a council's public reputation.

Working with the LGA, the Council conducted a Swindon residents' survey in November 2017 to gauge their views about the Council and the services they receive. The headline results on the next page are set against the results of the LGA's national survey of resident satisfaction with councils (October 2017).



¹<http://commission.westcotrading.com>

	2017 Swindon residents' survey	2017 LGA national residents' survey
Satisfaction with the local area Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?	84% satisfied 11% dissatisfied	83% satisfied 8% dissatisfied
Satisfaction with the way the council runs things Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Swindon Borough Council runs things?	66% satisfied 23% dissatisfied	66% satisfied 17% dissatisfied
Feeling informed Overall, how well informed do you think Swindon Borough Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?	57% informed 43% not informed	65% informed 36% not informed
Trust in council How much do you trust Swindon Borough Council?	60% trust great deal/fair amount 40% trust not very much/not at all	68% trust great deal/fair amount ² 32% trust not very much/not at all
Perceived value for money To what extent do you agree or disagree that Swindon Borough Council provides value for money?	52% agreed 27% disagreed	51% agreed 25% disagreed
Council responsiveness To what extent do you think Swindon Borough Council acts on the concerns of local residents?	56% fair amount/great deal 44% not very much/not at all	60% fair amount/great deal 40% not very much/not at all
Engaged Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the level of engagement Swindon Borough Council offers to local residents?	47% satisfied 28% dissatisfied	No equivalent question asked

² The LGA have described this result as unusually high looking across 19 rounds of national survey work, potentially due to a change in the survey question ordering. The latest round of survey results published in May 2018 reported this figure at 57%. www.local.gov.uk/polling-resident-satisfaction-councils-may-2018

Many different factors contribute to how residents perceive a council and the services it provides. The output of the Communications Team can impact significantly on those public perceptions.

By working with our political and managerial leadership, staff and partners to deliver this strategy over the next two years, our objective is to achieve a positive correlation in maintaining and/or enhancing the extent to which residents feel informed and engaged in the Council's work.

The survey results indicate that the Council should consider the approach it takes to corporate community engagement if it is to convince more residents and stakeholders that it is listening to them and delivering services and benefits that meet their needs. A community engagement and consultation strategy, currently in development, should help address this.



Our narrative

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge³ (2016) and LGA Communications Peer Review (2018) undertaken in Swindon both highlighted the importance of the Council having a clear narrative, central to all communications activity.

This ties the communication of our plans and delivery of specific projects to an overarching story that explains what we are trying to achieve for residents and the borough. For example, how new housing developments in Wichelstowe and New Eastern Villages are part of the Council's overall goal to ensure Swindon has the right number and mix of homes needed for an increasing population. And why we are investing in the road network to support Swindon's growth.

Core corporate narrative in three sentences: resident audience

Here in Swindon we understand what matters to you and your family: an affordable home, good education, job opportunities and quality of life in a great location.

That's why we're working with partners to deliver our vision for Swindon so that the borough continues to thrive in the future and benefits from well-managed growth, investment and regeneration.

We will provide services to you as efficiently and effectively as possible, so that we live within our means and prioritise the services needed to support our vulnerable children and adults.



³ <https://www5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s86175/Appendix%201%20-%20The%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Feed-back%20Report.pdf>

The Communications Team will support the Council to tell this overarching story to residents proactively and consistently, linked to the continued progress made in delivering the vision, priorities and pledges.

The narrative is adapted for different audiences, to reflect their needs and motivations. For example, talking about Swindon the place (place narrative) to stakeholders outside the borough.

Core place narrative in three sentences: stakeholders outside the borough

Swindon is already one of the UK's fastest expanding and most productive areas.

We benefit from excellent transport links, competitive house prices, high employment levels and beautiful parks and surrounding countryside.

Big investment in new housing, schools, roads and town centre regeneration projects, including the £270 million North Star Village regional leisure destination, is why more businesses are switching onto Swindon and choosing to locate here.



Role of the Communications Team and how we work

“ Our aim:

To deliver best-in-class public sector communications by providing a service that helps improve the lives of people and communities in Swindon, assists with the effective operation of council services and delivers responsive and informative communications.

”

For the next two years, the Communications Team will focus on:

- Protecting and enhancing the reputation of the Council
- Communicating the Council's story, our corporate narrative, to residents:
 - What the Council is doing for local people and the borough
 - Why it matters to you and your family
 - How it can help you and your family
- Helping to explain the reasons for and impacts of council decisions, projects and service changes to those affected – linking this back to the overall corporate narrative
- Using the Swindon place narrative to communicate and engage with stakeholders outside the borough, including potential inward investors
- Supporting our political and managerial leadership to lead our staff in changing the way we work as a council to provide our services as efficiently and effectively as possible, living within our financial means and prioritising services to support our vulnerable children and adults.

We will do this by:

Embedding our role as trusted advisors

By being involved upstream when new projects and service changes are first considered, we will advise on reputational opportunities and risks. We will continue to embed our role as trusted advisors supporting senior leaders, attending key internal management and political meetings.

Delivering effective campaigns

Working as a central Communications Team, we will use our resource, professional skills and expertise to plan, deliver and evaluate strategic campaigns.

We place audience insight, measurement and evaluation at the heart of all that we do. Each campaign and communications project will involve developing a structured plan approved by the lead Cabinet Member and Director or Head of Service. Our approach to campaign work is based on the clear, best practice OASIS model⁴ developed by the Government Communication Service.

⁴ <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/campaigns/guide-to-campaign-planning-2/>

OASIS is a series of steps that can help bring order and clarity to planning campaigns. These steps help make the planning process rigorous, consistent and ensures that all council communications are effective, efficient and evaluated.

This model is applicable to every kind of planned communication: from deciding the most effective way to share news with residents, to running long-term multi-channel campaigns that support council priorities.

Over the past year we have made good progress in demonstrating the value of well-planned, evidence-based strategic communications, including the successful campaign that supported the voter ID pilot in Swindon in the May 2018 local elections (see case study Annex A).

The Communications Team has established a good working relationship with the Government Communication Service South West office (based in Bristol), supporting the cascade of national campaigns in the annual Government Communication Plan⁵ to our local audiences.

We have followed-up a recommendation in the LGA Communications Peer Review (January 2018), setting up a Public Sector Communications Board with communication colleagues across Swindon and Wiltshire. The aim is to share information and identify crossover priorities, audiences and campaigns to potentially help make efficiencies and increase campaign reach.



⁵ <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/communications-plan/>

2018-2020 Campaign Plan

We follow the Government Communication Service campaign model.
This defines a campaign as:



A planned sequence of communications that use a compelling narrative over time to deliver a defined measurable outcome.



The following pages set out the campaigns and projects we will focus on across 2018-2020.

To prioritise clearly where professional communications resources can most add value, each of the proposed campaigns and projects meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. Tells the overall story of how the Council is delivering what matters to residents, their families and Swindon's future
2. Supports the delivery of a specific vision pledge and a defined measurable outcome
3. Responds to demand/feedback from residents – what matters to them
4. Supports the Council's drive to provide services to residents as efficiently and effectively as possible

By using this criteria and with Cabinet's endorsement of this strategy and campaign plan, the Communications Team has a clear mandate and focus on delivering proactive campaign work that makes a meaningful and measurable contribution to clearly defined outcomes.



Priority campaigns

These are the substantive campaigns which will require sustained and intensive communications resource over the period of this strategy.

Delivery of the foster carer recruitment campaign has already begun (May 2018), while the others are subject to further scoping and working through the OASIS framework. A detailed plan will be developed for each campaign, agreed with the relevant lead Cabinet Member and Director or Head of Service.

Telling the Council's story #SwindonFuture	
Aim	Give residents a clear understanding of the Council's role in delivering what matters to them, their families and Swindon's future (our corporate narrative)
Objective	To enhance residents' survey informed and satisfaction ratings
Overview	<p>This overarching campaign will timeline activity and opportunities to consistently communicate the Council's role in Swindon's growth story</p> <p>It will articulate our corporate narrative, using key phrases and elements in our media relations and social media activity, online content and face-to-face engagement</p> <p>It will help residents link delivery against individual council pledges to the overall story of investment in housing, schools and the town centre needed to support Swindon's future</p>

Telling Swindon's story #SwindonFuture	
Aim	Support the Council's economic growth objectives by giving potential inward investment audiences a compelling account of what Swindon has to offer (place narrative)
Objective	To support the Council's pledge to improve the reputation and image of Swindon to attract inward investment
Overview	Specific requirements will be developed in consultation with the Economic Growth Team, to complement the evolution of the Switch On To Swindon place marketing initiative and support delivery of the Inward Investment Strategy and Business Retention and Expansion Strategy

Investing in Swindon's roads

Aim	Help residents understand the bigger picture of investment in road network improvements and new capacity to support Swindon's growth
Objective	To improve residents' survey informed rating measures in the Swindon National Highways and Transport Network Survey
Overview	<p>The 2017 Swindon residents' survey indicates that 'road and pavement repairs' and the 'level of traffic congestion' are high on the list of things that residents believe need improving</p> <p>This campaign will seek to provide a clear overview of the Council's road investment and improvement programme</p>

Foster carer recruitment

Aim	To support the Council's pledge to recruit 100 fostering households between 2018 and 2023, in order to increase the proportion of Swindon's looked after children being placed with Swindon foster carers
Objective	To generate public enquiries and expressions of interest into the Fostering Recruitment Team
Overview	This ongoing campaign began in May 2018 to support Foster Care Fortnight and future phases will support key periods across the year to generate public interest and promote information events

Sustainable Swindon: recycle more, waste less

Aim	<p>Help residents understand the options being considered to boost recycling rates in Swindon and how they can have their say.</p> <p>To support implementation of the Council's new waste strategy once agreed</p>
Objective	To support the development of the new waste strategy and implementation to drive up recycling rates
Overview	Role of communications and campaign work to be fully scoped as the development of the waste strategy is progressed in 2018

Other campaigns

These campaigns outlined below, typically run over a short period of time and require less intensive support.

Social worker recruitment	Support the recruitment of more permanent social workers in both children's and adult services
Modern customer services	Help residents understand how we are improving our customer service channels and the transitional support available
Value for money	Using opportunities such as the LGA's annual #OurDay Tweetathon and the annual council tax bill mailing / e-mailing to demonstrate the value the Council delivers for residents providing hundreds of services
Tackling potholes	Proactively explain the Council's approach to managing the repair of potholes and how residents can help report them online
Road safety: red light running	To deter red light running at Swindon hot spots, working in collaboration with Wiltshire Police
Safeguarding	Encouraging the public to report safeguarding concerns about children and young people
Connecting with residents	Expand our communications reach, increase social media followers, visits to website and e-newsletter subscribers
Get ready for winter	Help residents prepare for potential adverse weather, signposting information and promoting our road gritting service that keeps Swindon moving
Flu vaccinations	Encourage council staff take-up of flu vaccinations to improve winter resilience and business continuity

Other projects

These require less intensive support, typically over a short period of time, to support service areas on specific projects.

Road improvements	Ongoing support to deliver consistent and effective communications and engagement activity around road improvement works, clearly explaining the benefits
Grow our trade waste collection service	Help win new trade waste customers and additional income
Service area changes/ consultations and engagement	Support individual service areas to communicate consultation and engagement activity to stakeholders around new policies and service changes (e.g. Kingshill Road area Air Quality Action Plan)

In consultation with the political and managerial leadership, the Communications Team will reprioritise and reallocate resources as necessary to respond to emerging priorities in light of future council decisions, projects and service changes.



Core communication channels and activities

In addition to delivering the campaigns and projects identified earlier in this strategy, the Communications Team will continue to:

- Deliver a proactive and reactive media relations service to protect and enhance the Council's reputation
- Manage and act as the guardian of the Council's visual identity, ensuring it is used consistently and appropriately
- Proactively manage and continue to grow the reach of the Council's social media channels – 10,600 Twitter followers, 4,600 Facebook followers and 4,500 likes (June 2018)
- Oversee the operation of other council-managed social media accounts in line with good practice
- Manage internal corporate communications channels and staff engagement activity
- Lead by example in ensuring that all corporate communications are written in plain English avoiding jargon
- Work with Customer Services to optimise the Council's website as the preferred and main council communications channel for many residents (evidenced in 2017 Swindon residents' survey)
- Produce *Highways News* (fortnightly) and *Your Swindon* (ad hoc) e-newsletters
- Quality assure service area e-newsletters, providing performance data and advising on improvements to enhance readership and engagement
- Manage communications with housing tenants
- Manage the production of the annual council tax booklet
- Provide specialist design and print services
- Member of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum Media and Communications Sub-Group
- Support the Council's response to emergency incidents

Staff communications and engagement

A separate staff communications and engagement strategy will be delivered alongside this strategy and campaign plan

At its core are the four enablers to better employee engagement identified by the McLeod *Engaging for Success* report⁶ (2009):

1. Visible, empowering leadership providing a strong strategic narrative about the organisation, where it's come from and where it's going
2. Engaging managers who focus their people and give them scope, treat their people as individuals and coach and stretch their people
3. There is employee voice throughout the organisation for reinforcing and challenging views, between functions and externally, employees are seen as central to the solution
4. There is organisational integrity – the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviours. There is no 'say –do' gap

The staff communications and engagement strategy seeks to improve our approach. It is informed by a staff survey conducted in 2017 and a review of our existing internal communication channels and activities. This will include making use of new tools such as Skype for Business.

Continuous improvement

In July 2018 the LGA and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) launched an online publication called *#FutureComms building local public services for the future through modern communications*.

This is aimed primarily at executive politicians and managers in local government, looking at the role that communications and engagement should play in the delivery of public services.

We will encourage and support the political and managerial leadership team to apply this best practice here in Swindon, continually seeking to improve our approach. In January 2018, we invited a team from the LGA to Swindon to conduct a three-day communications healthcheck. This made a number of helpful recommendations that we are making good progress in implementing.

The Communications Team is also represented on the Executive Committee of LGcommunications - a national body made up of an association of authorities that works to raise the standard of communications in local government.

⁶ In 2009 BIS published *Engaging for Success* (more commonly known as the MacLeod Report), a study by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke of over organisations across the UK demonstrating high employee engagement and high performance.
<http://engageforsuccess.org/engaging-for-success>

Annex A

Case study

voter ID campaign



Overview

Swindon Borough Council took part in a government-funded pilot to trial the use of voter ID at the May 2018 local elections.

Working closely with the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office, the Communications Team developed a comprehensive campaign plan (summarised below) using the OASIS campaign model⁷ that was implemented between January and May 2018.

Audience

- Around 134K registered voters, with particular focus on audiences identified in the Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) to make sure they were aware of the voter ID requirements

Objectives

- To maximise the number of qualified voters able to vote in the 3 May 2018 Swindon Borough elections because they present their polling card or other form of approved ID
- To achieve 80% awareness of the pilot requirements
- To maintain a 32.61% voter turnout in Swindon
- To minimise the number of voter ID-related calls and emails received from residents

Strategy

- To provide a regular flow of communications between January and 3 May 2018 to introduce and explain the voter ID pilot, providing clear, accessible messages and timely reminders to residents
- Ensure key messages are understood and disseminated by our partners and local trusted voices

⁷ <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/campaigns/guide-to-campaign-planning-2>

Implementation

- Mix of media relations, digital communications, outdoor, print and social media advertising and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Letter and flyer sent with council tax bills to 86K Swindon households
- 10K leaflets distributed
- Reminder on poll card sent to all registered (non-postal) voters
- 322 social media posts generated 1.49M impressions and 1,420 engagements
- 506 stakeholder groups contacted: 222 cascaded information and campaign materials. 155 of these groups were supporting communities identified in the DIA
- 58 pieces of positive or neutral local media coverage across TV, radio, newspapers and online outlets
- 28 newsletter articles (council e-newsletters, parish council and community newsletters) with a combined reach of over 86K
- 12.1K web page views which included over 900 views of our video subtitled in the six most spoken languages in Swindon
- Out-of-home advertising including: banner at our main recycling centre, 30 bus back adverts and 58 bus shelter posters

Scoring (Evaluation)

- 60 residents were asked to return to the polling station with an approved form of ID
- Of those 60 residents, 35 returned with satisfactory ID
- 25 voters did not return – which represents 0.04% of 62,191 eligible voters who went to a polling station to vote
- Polling through Customer Services showed a general resident awareness level of 80% in the three weeks leading up to the elections
- Turnout increased from the last borough only elections by 6% up to 39.7% (compared to 34.4% in 2016)
- Across the five-month campaign, Customer Services received approximately 130 resident calls specifically related to the voter ID pilot

