

# Corporate Communications Strategy

2016 - 2019



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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose of the strategy**

Good communications are essential for our Council. We must provide residents with the clear messages that they need to access our services, raise their awareness of what the Council does, our vision and values and the impact of what we do on our local communities. Research shows that there is a clear link between how well-informed people feel about their Council and how satisfied they are with it.

Effective communications can help to influence behaviour and attitudes. In the current challenging local government landscape, where tough choices and service changes are inevitable, they play a key role in managing our reputation and helping us to build trust and confidence in the decisions we make.

This strategy provides a corporate framework to guide the Council's communications and marketing activities to ensure they support our work towards achieving the Council's Vision to Develop a Better District and its supporting objectives and priorities.

## **1.2 Context**

Daventry District Council's communications strategy was last reviewed and updated in 2012 in the format of a management plan. It followed on from a previous strategy in 2008 that improved consistency of communications by establishing media and marketing protocols. The 2012 document built upon the need to embed a communications culture at the Council and recognised the emergence and growing importance of digital channels, such as social media, by residents seeking and sharing news and information.

The past four years have continued to see significant changes to the communications landscape, with the continuing rise in popularity of digital technology and decline in traditional channels such as local newspapers.

This strategy reflects upon these changes and sets out new goals for improvement and identifies future opportunities for developing the Council's corporate communications over the next three years.

# **2. Objectives of the Strategy**

- Ensure the Council's services, priorities and objectives, ambitions and challenges are communicated openly and effectively, that residents are informed of issues relevant to them and these messages are understood.
- Identify ways that communications and marketing activities can support the Council's priority areas and to concentrate resources on doing so cost-effectively.
- Use, develop and explore all forms of communication to inform and engage our audiences.
- Manage and enhance the Council's reputation and enable the authority to 'get closer to the public' and fulfil its role as a community leader

- Ensure a continual and measurable improvement in communications activities.
- Ensure all Members and Officers are kept informed and engaged about what the Council does and how they are expected to support this strategy.

### 3. Communication principles

Our Council will:

- Communicate as one organisation
- Use plain English in our communications
- Ensure our communications are timely, open and honest, focusing on the outcomes that matter to our residents
- Strive to make its communications accessible to all
- Listen to and engage with our audiences, using communications channels that work best for them.

### 4. Our audiences

Our Council communicates with the following audiences:

- All residents of Daventry District and prospective residents
- Other users of Council services
- Visitors and tourists to Daventry District
- Investors and developers
- Existing businesses and those who may relocate here
- The media (national, regional, local and trade)
- Community and voluntary groups
- Local parish councils and neighbouring local authorities
- Partners in the public and private sector
- Government bodies and non-governmental organisations
- DDC Members
- DDC employees.

### 5. Our communication channels

The Council currently uses the following channels to communicate to its key audiences:

<b>External communications channels</b>	<b>Internal channels</b>
Media releases and briefings Media (national, regional, local, specialist, print, broadcast and online) DDC website Social media – Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn	Council Courier Intranet Team briefs Annual staff

Daventry Calling residents' magazine (printed quarterly) Printed materials – posters, leaflets, flyers Online video promotions Outdoor marketing – banners, noticeboards, bus advertising Public events, displays, roadshows and consultations Partner websites and social media pages Reports and briefings Letters and service emails Statutory public notices Customer Contact Centre	meetings Email Noticeboards
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This strategy seeks to develop communications using these existing channels and explore additional methods for informing and engaging our audiences.

## 6. Key messages

Communications and marketing activities need to support and reflect the Council's vision to 'Develop a Better District'. The messages we communicate as a Council need to be in line with our four corporate strategic objectives, to:

- Improve our Business Economy, Learning and Skills
- Protect and Enhance the Environment
- Promote Healthy, Safe and Strong Communities and Individuals
- Be an Efficient and Effective Council.

A series of key messages, based upon these objectives and underpinning priorities, can be developed:

### 6.1 Improve our Business Economy, Learning and Skills – key messages

- Daventry District is a great place to live, work, visit, and invest in.
- Our District is 'Open for Business' – a fast-growing, affordable location with excellent transport links, offering new markets, new jobs and development opportunities.
- We are delivering our Town Centre Vision to transform Daventry with new quality housing, education, retail, leisure and community facilities.
- Improving our education, skills and learning in Daventry is a priority and we are working with partners to identify, facilitate and develop these opportunities.
- The support and delivery of major new infrastructure in our District will help us to accommodate growth and attract fresh investment and employment opportunities (eg the Daventry Development Link Road, Superfast Broadband)
- We support our local businesses in town and rural areas to help them thrive and overcome barriers to economic growth.
- Tourism is a key driver for inward investment and we will work with local businesses, venues and other partners to increase visitors and promote the many attractions our District has to offer.

## **6.2 Protect and Enhance the Environment – key messages**

- We work with our local communities and involve them to create a cleaner and greener Daventry District
- Our District is rich in heritage and character that must be preserved and protected
- We are working to reduce our District's waste and energy use and create environmentally-friendly communities
- We are proud of the quality and recreational facilities of our parks and open spaces.

## **6.3 Promote Healthy, Safe and Strong Communities and Individuals – key messages**

- Our District is a place that encourages people to lead active and healthy lifestyles
- We are improving local opportunities for sport, leisure and culture and promote the many attractions our District has to offer
- It is a priority for us that people have the housing they need and more affordable homes are delivered to meet growing demand
- We will support our elderly and vulnerable residents to live independently for as long as possible
- We work with partners to tackle poverty, disadvantage and social isolation and to reduce anti-social behaviour to make our communities safer.

## **6.4 To be an Efficient and Effective Council – key messages**

- We target our resources effectively and manage our budgets prudently, offering our residents value for money.
- We are an innovative, forward-thinking authority that seeks new ways and opportunities to deliver our services more efficiently.
- Our financial strategy of invest-to-save initiatives is delivering positive outcomes to our communities, aiding economic growth and maximising our income generation.
- We are open and transparent in everything we do and strive to make our services accessible to everyone.
- We listen to our residents and involve them in the decisions we make about the services we provide.

## **7. Strategic themes**

Five strategic communications themes are identified:

- Public relations and media activity
- Digital communications
- Corporate marketing
- Internal communications
- Publications.

## 8. Theme 1 – Public relations and media activity

### 8.1 Strategic aims

- Proactively educate and inform the public about the Council, its objectives, plans and services.
- Develop and maintain effective media relations locally, regionally and nationally to raise the profile of Daventry District, the Council and its services
- Improve the public’s understanding of the work of the Council, its vision and objectives, whilst at the same time influencing opinion and behaviour
- Manage, protect and improve the reputation of Daventry District Council, turning reactive activity into proactive activity wherever possible.

### 8.2 How we will measure success

- Number of proactive and reactive media releases issued
- Number of social media posts produced
- Total reach/number of views of social media posts and web news items
- Monitoring and recording the quantity and the quality of the media coverage we achieve
- Media satisfaction surveys
- Resident surveys on satisfaction with the Council.

### 8.3 What needs to be done

<b>Public relations and media activity</b>	
1	Review and develop annual activity planners of media and PR opportunities for all teams linked to the corporate objectives.
2	Prioritise a PR activity plan for the delivery of the Daventry Town Centre Vision proposals, economic development and investment proposals.
3	Increase the positive national profile of Daventry District, including coverage in specialist and trade press
4	Review methods for monitoring and evaluating media coverage and social media
5	Review and improve existing processes and methods for informing and engaging the media about Council news and information (eg media releases, briefings, images, videos)
6	Develop and maintain a list of media contacts (local, regional and national)
7	Develop and improve communications and protocols with partner organisations (eg parishes, contractors)

## 9. Theme 2 – Digital Communications

### 9.1 Strategic aims

- Continually seek out and exploit the opportunities presented by digital communications to benefit Daventry District Council and the communities it serves
- Use digital channels to promote the work of the Council and its services and to listen and engage with our residents
- Increase online accessibility to services and improve convenience for residents by using channels that work best for them
- Achieve efficiencies for the taxpayer through the use of electronic communications wherever possible.

### 9.2 How we will measure success

- Regular monitoring and reporting of the number of visitors to the websites [www.daventrydc.gov.uk](http://www.daventrydc.gov.uk) and [www.lovedaventry.com](http://www.lovedaventry.com)
- Evaluating the reach and engagement of our activities on social media sites and other online platforms
- Measuring take-up of digital channels to access services and seeking feedback from online surveys, forms and polls
- External monitoring mechanisms, eg annual “Better Connected” SOCITM report, social media index etc.

### 9.3 What needs to be done

Digital Communications	
1	Develop the engagement, reach and effectiveness of the Council’s social media activity (number of views and followers on Facebook / Twitter).
2	Develop and evaluate use of social media advertising (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn) to promote events, projects and services.
3	Develop and improve current use by residents of Facebook and Twitter as frontline customer services channels for responding to queries and complaints.
4	Review and continue to develop social media guidance and protocols for Members and Officers.
5	Carry out audience mapping of our residents’ social media use to target promotions more effectively and explore new platforms.
6	Work with all teams to review and improve editorial content of the Daventry District Council website and prepare/complete an annual action plan.
7	Increase promotion of online services, such as e-billing accounts, to encourage the channel-shift process for accessing Council services
8	Develop and improve the use of video as a key promotional channel
9	Explore email marketing / e-bulletin technology and mailing lists to communicate Council messages, news and information
10	Explore live-streaming mobile phone technology (Facebook Live, Periscope) for external community events and activities



## 10. Theme 3 – Corporate marketing

### 10.1 Strategic aims

- Prioritise place marketing activities, such as Love Daventry, to raise the District’s profile both nationally and locally as a great place to live, work, visit and invest in.
- Deliver creative and cost-effective marketing campaigns about DDC services that will change perceptions and promote the outcomes that matter to our residents.
- Provide professional marketing and events activity that supports the work of all teams towards the Council’s corporate vision and delivery of objectives
- Raise further public awareness of the Council’s brand to
- Emphasise the Council brand and its visual identity to manage and enhance reputation and help the public understand the services we provide and their value to the local community.
- Improve understanding of the corporate identity by employees, partners and external suppliers and how to use it consistently to achieve easier and quicker public recognition of our services.

### 10.2 How we will measure success

- Consistent and professional branding across the Council for all communications and marketing material
- Positive feedback and customer satisfaction on marketing and events campaigns, via social media channels etc.

### 10.3 What needs to be done

Marketing actions	
1	Develop the Love Daventry place marketing initiative and its key publicity channels (such as lovedaventry.com) via an annual action plan of targeted activities and improvements.
2	Work with partners to produce new marketing materials to support and promote economic development of Daventry, including the delivery of key Town Centre Vision sites and Daventry Market - to be integrated with PR and media activity (see Section 8)
3	Review DDC’s marketing guidance and templates for staff to improve consistency of publicity materials
4	Review and update corporate branding guidelines for staff, partners and suppliers.

## 11. Theme 4 – Internal Communications

### 11.1 Strategic aims

- To develop a framework for internal communications that makes all employees feel valued, well informed and motivated
- To keep Members well informed and support and advise them in delivering clear communications to residents
- To ensure all Members and Officers understand the Council's vision and objectives so they are can act as ambassadors for the Council
- To be timely and proactive in informing all our Members and Officers about key issues and events that affect the Council
- To maintain a strong two-way flow of information within the Council that supports and encourages teamwork, trust and loyalty
- To ensure employees are consulted about the development of policies, practice and procedures.

### 11.2 How we will measure success

- Surveying Members and Officers about how well informed they feel to set targets for improvement (eg annual employee satisfaction survey, member development evaluation forms)
- Monitoring communications ability in annual appraisals (via performance against values)

### 11.3 What needs to be done

Internal Communications	
1	Review and improve the monthly Council Courier core brief / team briefs and annual staff presentations
2	Produce a new quarterly 'Spotlight' corporate newsletter for Members.
3	Work with all teams to review and improve the editorial content of the Council's Intranet system.
4	Media training for Members and Officers
5	Develop the use of e-learning modules and webinars to support internal communications
6	Review and develop Communications Handbook and associated protocols (eg social media guidance, corporate style guide )

## 12. Theme 5 – Publications

### 12.1 Strategic aims

- Develop professionally-produced publications that support and enhance the Council's other communications activity
- Deliver maximum value for money and aim to reduce costs wherever possible
- Continually review the effectiveness and relevance of corporate publications to our target audiences.
- Ensure content of our reports and publications is relevant and timely to residents, in Plain English and accessible to all.

### 12.2 How we will measure success

- Readership / customer surveys
- Regular evaluation of readership statistics for publications posted online
- Benchmarking with other local authority publications
- Cost-effectiveness of publications

### 12.3 What needs to be done

Publications	
1	Review and improve the editorial design and content of Daventry Calling magazine.
2	Review and improve the print and distribution arrangements for Daventry Calling
3	Review and develop digital publishing platforms, such as Issuu.com and PDF presentation software for online viewing of Daventry Calling magazine and other corporate publications
4	Review arrangements for corporate publications including the annual report and summary of accounts, Council Tax leaflet and other ad-hoc materials (eg Daventry District promotional brochure, DDF newsletters etc). Explore alternative presentation methods, such as use of infographics etc.

## 13. Supporting policies and guidance

The Communications Strategy not only underpins the measures within the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan but supports and complements other guidance, policies and strategies including the following:

- DDC Communications Handbook ( including media and marketing protocols, corporate style guide and website CMS guide)
- Corporate Social Media Policy for Officers and Social Media Guidance for Members
- The ICT Strategy and ICT Usage Practices

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Customer Service Handbook
- Rules for Recording and Reporting Public Council Meetings
- Data Protection Policy and information handling practices.