

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2026

Contents:

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Our aims	2
3. Objectives.....	2
4. Principles	3
5. How we will increase our engagement with residents.....	4
6. Audiences.....	4
7. Key messages	5
8. Channels	5
9. Planning, measurement and evaluation.....	7
10. Resources and professional development	8

1. Introduction

This Communications and Engagement Strategy is driven by our strategic objectives as an organisation and will support the new corporate plan due to be implemented in 2022 – 2026. It's a living document that will be reviewed during its lifetime.

Through effective communications and engagement, we can support and deliver these objectives to our stakeholders.

This strategy has been informed by a range of corporate documents such as The Vision 2040, The Corporate Plan and Service Plans. It compliments other corporate objectives such as the Equality Objectives 2021 – 2023 which states;

To develop a communication and engagement strategy and guidance in order to enhance our approach to engagement across the Council and to ensure we hear from our diverse communities.

This document will inform the following documents:

- Content Strategy (written alongside this strategy)
- Consultation Strategy
- Corporate manual and guidelines
- Communication toolkit for staff

This strategy aims to provide an outline to the communications and engagement service delivered by Hart District Council.

Supporting the Council's 2040 Vision

The vision is for Hart to become the best place to live, work and enjoy.

This Communications and Engagement Strategy aims to help in the delivery of two of those key priorities namely;

- Increasingly use digital solutions to provide the services that our residents both need and expect, helping them to get the services 24/7 and enabling the council to focus resources on the digitally excluded and most vulnerable or complex cases.
- Continuing to build a great sense of community, reducing social isolation, celebrating our diversity, and strengths and through this increasing community connectedness and resilience.

2. Our aims

We aim to build confidence in the council through effective communications and engagement with our residents, businesses, partners, councillors and staff.

We will build trust by communicating with integrity and providing consistent and accurate information in a timely fashion.

We aim to provide accessible communications is a priority, reflecting our desire to make Hart a community that respects inclusion and diversity.

3. Objectives

Continue day-to-day fundamentals: This includes

- Informing the public, businesses, visitors and the media about our work
- Continuing to manage and improve the Council's website
- Managing the council's social media platforms
- Producing high quality publications such as Hart News
- Providing strategic communications advice and support to councillors and council officers
- Providing support to teams across the council who are carrying out consultation and engagement activities
- Building effective relationships with external stakeholders (suppliers, partners, other local authorities, etc)
- Delivering a quality, pro-active media relations service
- Crisis communications

Corporate narrative: We will tell a clear story and explain what we are doing and what we aim to achieve

Positive and proactive: A key component of this strategy is to re-focus our efforts on delivering positive content. We want to celebrate our success and showcase the things we do well.

Engaging content: We will increase the use of images, video and infographics to tell our story in a simple way

Enhance our visual identity: We will develop the Hart District Council brand so that it has a clear identity

Digital technologies: We will utilise digital technologies to deliver our service and communicate with our audience

Connecting staff and councillors: We will continue to communicate organisational plans and strategies and encourage organisational engagement

Be inclusive: We will continue to try and reach diverse audiences and increase the diversity of people who engage with the council

Sustainable: We will work alongside the council's ambition to become a carbon neutral authority by 2035.

4. Principles

To achieve the objectives set out within this strategy communications need to be:

- **Consistent** – link back to the key strategic messages and strengthen our brand
- **Planned** – include a communications plan in every project, service change or initiative
- **Proactive** – consult and engage with residents early on and prepare communications in advance of important issues coming to Cabinet and Council
- **Authentic** – identify key officers as media spokespeople and use more people led videos
- **Accessible to all** – continue to develop our accessibility standards within the organisation
- **Transparent** – open and honest and inform local people when their views and opinions cannot be acted upon and the reasons for this

5. How we will increase our engagement with residents

Good engagement can create social connections between individuals and groups.

It can enhance the motivation and capacity to participate in decision-making, and it can bolster economic efficiency and resident choice. It fosters a more open relationship with residents, saving time that might otherwise have been spent fighting long-running battles. It generates capacity in the community, by building on assets, networks and local identity. It also helps residents to understand and access the system more easily.

As a council we will:

- We will set a clear distinction between engagement and consultation
- Use the Local Government Association New Conversations 2.0 guide as best practice to develop engagement techniques within the council
- We will take steps to engage with hard-to-reach communities

6. Audiences

We communicate and engage with a wide range of audiences and key stakeholders. Below lists provides a snapshot of these audiences:

- Residents
- Customers
- Suppliers
- Businesses and investors
- Visitors
- Media (local, regional, national and trade) and hyperlocal news sites (community blogs, community social media pages, online forums, village newsletters)
- Partnerships eg Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Rushmoor Borough Council, East Hampshire District Council, NHS
- Voluntary sector
- Special interest groups (either permanent or established for a particular issue)
- Staff
- Councillors
- Parish and Town Councils
- Hampshire Local Authorities and other authorities adjacent to Hart
- County Council
- MPs
- National government
- Government agencies and/or regulatory bodies
- Other public sector partners such as Police, NHS and Schools

7. Key messages

The key messages below are informed from our Corporate Plan. They convey our priorities as an organisation and should be woven into the messaging provided by services.

- Hart is a resilient council providing value for money services
- Hart is positively responding to the climate change emergency and creating great environments
- Hart supports and encourages a thriving local economy
- Hart provides safe and connected communities
- Hart will facilitate decent affordable homes across the district

8. Channels

- Face to face
- Telephone
- Contact Centre (IVR messaging)
- Website
- Letter
- Web chat
- Teams
- SMS
- Customer accounts
- Social media – Facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn
- Video – YouTube (including council meetings YouTube channel)
- Press
- Parish link
- Covid update
- Business enews update
- Hart News
- Printed materials – leaflets, posters, bin hangers
- Consultations and surveys
- Customer feedback
- Staff newsletter
- SharePoint intranet

The graphic (on the page below) outlines the communication channels available and looks at the why, what, who, when and how for their use.

Communication channels

Why?

- Build confidence
- Engagement
- Build trust
- Provide consistent, accurate and timely comms
- Provide accessible comms

What?

- Hart Vision
- Hart Values
- Corporate Plan
- Service Plans
- Services
- Business support
- Community safety
- Council tax
- Business rates
- Elections
- Health, wellbeing and inclusion
- Housing
- Parking
- Waste & recycling
- Environment – climate change
- Planning
- Countryside inc. events
- Strategic projects
- Consultations
- Council meetings
- Councillors
- Press releases & statements
- News
- Policies & guidelines
- Crisis comms
- Community events

Who?

- Residents
- Customers
- Businesses
- Investors
- Visitors
- Media
- Partners
- Voluntary sector
- Special Interest Groups
- Employees
- Councillors
- Parish Councils
- County Council
- MPs
- Central government
- Government agencies/regulatory bodies
- Trade unions

When and how?

Hourly

- Face to face
- Website
- Intranet
- Social media
- Email
- Phone
- Letter
- Teams
- Posters
- Leaflets

Daily

Weekly

- Team meetings and cascades
- Inductions
- Covid update
- Business enews update
- Video

Fortnightly

- Parish Link
- Staff newsletter

Monthly

- All staff briefing
- Scheduled council meetings
- Photography
- Graphic design
- Scheduled consultations
- Scheduled media
- Infographics

Bi Annual

- Hart News
- Staff induction
- Countryside events

Annual

- Financial reports
- Staff survey
- Council Tax billing

Principles

Consistent

Authentic

Planned

Accessible to all

Proactive

Transparent

9. Planning, measurement and evaluation

Our campaigns will take a rigorous and planned approach, following the OASIS model advocated by the Government Communications Service (GCS):

- Objectives (what is the communication activity trying to achieve)
- Audience insights (outline the audience and any insights on them)
- Strategy (where we set out the approach applied)
- Implementation (how will we deliver the campaign)
- Scoring and evaluation (how we measure the effectiveness and success of the campaign)

Measurement and evaluation

Measuring and evaluating communication and engagement activities is split into four main categories:

- *Inputs* (Defines the target audiences, looks at inputs necessary to inform and prepare communications.)
- *Outputs* (Communication and engagement activities. Analytics show digital reach.)
- *Outtakes* (Stakeholder experiences and what they took away or learned. Analytics show digital sharing and comments, etc.)
- *Outcomes* (Stakeholder behaviour and behaviour change. Analytics show survey completion linked to social media posts.)

An example might look as follows:

- Inputs (Social media analytics show low levels of young adults completing a consultation)
- Outputs (The team runs pop-up events at local leisure centres to target young adults, in addition to paid social media targeting young adults.)
- Outtakes (Young adults express an interest in learning more. Analytics show young people discussing or sharing content.)
- Outcomes (An increase in survey completions and meeting attendance in this demographic. Some volunteer for focus groups.)

KPIs

- Website – 98% uptime of website
- Social media - 10% increase in engagement (year on year)
- Produce a monthly dashboard showing communication and engagement increases across a range of platforms
- Pulse surveys launched to track engagement among employees, and 10% improvement during the plan period led by HR

- Pulse surveys run to track website navigation and content (move from 57% score in Sept 21 to 77% by 2026)
- 100% of large-scale council projects (the corporate project list) to be supported by a communication strategy by 2026
- 100% of communication campaigns using OASIS framework by 2026
- 25% of press releases/statements issued by video by 2026

10. Resources and professional development

Communications and engagement doesn't solely sit within the communications and engagement team. It should be demonstrated across the whole organisation and all officers and councillors should embody the strategy to deliver effective communications to our audience.

Professional development and regular training will be provided to officers and councillors by the communications team and external organisations.

Strategy contact:

Steve Bennett

Change, Customer and Digital Manager

steven.bennett@hart.gov.uk