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MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Growing Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday 7 March 2023
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

AGENDA

Growing Barnsley Workstream

Councillors Bowler, Cain, Clarke, Denton, Ennis OBE, Felton, Lodge, Markham, McCarthy, Peace, Webster, Wraith MBE

Administrative and Governance Issues for the Committee

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

To receive apologies for absence in accordance with Regulation 7 (6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

To invite Members of the Committee to make any declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest in connection with the items on this agenda.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 8)

To note the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee (Sustainable Barnsley Workstream) held on 7 February 2023 (Item 3 attached).

Overview and Scrutiny Issues for the Committee

4 Draft Communications & Marketing Strategy 2023 - 2025 (Pages 9 - 28)

To consider a report of the Executive Director Core Services (Item 4a) outlining the work of the council's Communications & Marketing Team and the Draft Communications & Marketing Strategy 2023 – 2025 (Item 4b)

Enquiries to Jane Murphy or Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officers

Email scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk

To: Chair and Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bellamy, Bowler, Bowser, Cain, Clarke, Denton, Eastwood, Felton, P. Fielding, W. Fielding, Green, Hand-Davis, Hayward, Lodge, Lowe-Flello, Markham, McCarthy, Mitchell, Moyes, Newing, Osborne, Peace, Pickering, Richardson, Risebury, Shirt, Smith, Sumner, Webster, Williams, Wilson, Wraith MBE and Wray together with Statutory Co-opted Member (Parent Governor Representative)

Electronic Copies Circulated for Information

Sarah Norman, Chief Executive

Shokat Lal, Executive Director Core Services

Rob Winter, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management

Michael Potter, Service Director, Business Improvement, HR and Communications

Sukdave Ghuman, Service Director, Law and Governance

Press

Witnesses

Item 4 (2pm approx)

Michael Potter- Service Director, Business Improvement, HR and Communications, Barnsley Council

Katie Rogers - Head of Communications and Marketing, Barnsley Council

Alison Dixon – Communications and Marketing Manager, Barnsley Council

Cllr Robin Franklin- Cabinet Spokesperson for Core Services

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Sustainable Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday 7 February 2023
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MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bellamy, Bowser, Cain, Clarke, Denton, Eastwood, P. Fielding, W. Fielding, Green, Hayward, Lodge, McCarthy, Mitchell, Moyes, Osborne, Richardson and Webster together with co-opted member and

42 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

43 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Osborne declared a non pecuniary interest as he is a member of the Berneslai Homes Board.

Councillor Moyes declared a non pecuniary interest as she is a member of the Police and Schools Panel and works for the GMB Trade Union.

44 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2023 were received.

45 Highways Peer Challenge - Outcomes & Actions Report

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Paul Castle – Service Director, Environment & Transport, Growth & Sustainability Directorate, BMBC

Matthew Bell – Head of Highways & Engineering, Growth & Sustainability Directorate, BMBC

Ian Wilson – Service Manager Highway Delivery, Growth & Sustainability Directorate, BMBC

Cllr James Higginbottom, Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment & Highways

Councillor Higginbottom informed members of the committee that the Highways Peer Review Challenge had been an effective and well regarded process. In September 2022 Highways and Engineering had invited the Peers to conduct a 3 day review of

the Service and through open and honest conversations, they had accumulated 50 hours of discussions of areas of strength and consideration.

Councillor Higginbottom passed on his own personal thanks to the team that work within the service, who always strived for continuous development and improvement. The Review had demonstrated that the highways service does a good job with the budget and its reduced resources, due to budget cuts over the years, in its service to the residents of the Borough.

Matthew Bell provided members with an overview of the LGA Peer Review. In doing so members heard how the Peer Review was not an inspection but that the Peer team had been invited to look into specific elements of the Highway Service and act as a critical friend. Information collected for the feedback had been gathered from various individuals which gained credibility that it was honest and fair and gathered from a variety of sources to give a well-rounded review.

The Peer Challenge Team consisted of 5 members from a variety of backgrounds and with a great depth of experience and knowledge. The feedback is set out in a standard format across all peer reviews to contrast with other similar local authorities in order to pool the learning. The 4 core components of feedback were:

- Context and priority setting
- Planning and performance
- Enablers
- Delivery

Members were informed that due to the Highways department being too broad to be considered in its entirety over three days, four areas of focus had been chosen and members were provided with an overview of each Area which included:

- Financial Aspects
- Customer Aspects
- Process Aspects
- People Aspects

Following the feedback session, five key areas had been highlighted for improvement:

- Review of the Structural alignment of highway related services specifically related to a number of historical pressures which resulted in services being moved to different parts of the organisation. Members were informed this is already underway with the re-location of the Strategic Transport function from Regeneration & Culture (BU4) to Environment & Transport (BU6).
- Better utilisation of external benchmarking datasets. Although internal performance monitoring and measurement was considered a strength by the Peer Review team, the use of external benchmarking metrics is not well developed. The service was judged to be light in what it did with information comparing to other Local Authorities and national indicator sets and benchmarking routes. The submitted return for this year placed Barnsley's

Highways Service into a group with local authorities of a similar size and demographic for a round and fair assessment.

- Long term programming of capital investment – members heard how the Council had not been given long term annual funding assurances from central government for the past 7 years so was unable to plan past a 12 month programme. However, a 5 year settlement had been agreed through the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) ensuring a degree of certainty as to what the funding horizon now looked like. It had enabled a more transparent view as opportunities present themselves for one off projects over the next 5 years enabling a realistic and true look at capital investments.
- Communication with the frontline remained a shortcoming as the frontline staff do not have regular access to the Council's network in order to check on corporate updates in the usual manner. Improvements had been made by installing big screens at Smithies Depot, notice boards and takeaway materials in order to pass on key messages.
- Strengthening the relationship between the service and elected members – this had highlighted how communications flow between the service and elected members and elected members understanding of where the services responsibilities sit. Specific feedback indicated that there was a difference when officers defined highways compared to the elected members definition. A lot of work was undertaken to post queries into the right department. In order to tackle these issue highways had commenced sending out weekly emails containing the highways programme of works and roadworks in the Borough. The emails also contained contact details of a 'one stop shop' to help the service in replying to members as quickly as possible.

Members heard how the key was not to focus solely on what needed to be changed, but to also recognise and preserve what the service already does well. It was acknowledged that Barnsley had a lot of experienced and competent middle managers that made important decisions which is not always the case when compared to other Local Authorities. In terms of Barnsley's identity there was a distinct pride of working for the Borough as most staff members also lived in the Town. There was a strong relationship with the MCA and the service had complete backing from SMT to deliver its strategy and vision for Barnsley. Recognition schemes for staff were in place such as Thank you letters and Shout Outs. There was an initiative to invest in apprenticeships with a view to once qualified, they would be moved around the service to gain further experience.

All feedback, actions and areas for consideration and strengths are being developed into a detailed action plan which was reviewed on 14th December 2023. Following this the service had started to deliver some changes and address some gaps detailed within the plan.

In the ensuing discussion and in response to detailed questioning and challenge the following matters were highlighted:

Following the peer review, it was highlighted that Highways had an extensive set of performance indicators to highlight progress made and that feedback from the public

and elected members was also taken on board. Attention going forward would be focused on gaps that they were already aware of and to give credibility and space to think how to tackle the next problems.

When asked what service leaders considered the greatest positives from the peer review, their response included recognition of the experience, professionalism, loyalty and pro-active culture of the Highway's staff, the return on investment of the apprenticeship programme, the leadership qualities of service managers and the high workmanship standards of front line teams.

In terms of funding, the Mayoral Combined Authority had been successful in securing a City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement of around £400M. Of which £5M would be allocated to Barnsley for Highway improvement activities per year for 5 years. This would be broken down to £4M for maintenance and £1M for highway improvements. The total budget would be around £15M which also incorporated capital revenue of £3.3M, any finances brought forward from the previous financial years and a further £2M, subject to agreement at full council, from the Council's budget for highways improvements and road safety improvements.

A key priority was that improvements needed to be made in terms of communications with elected members and members of the public. In order to address these issues, there was ongoing work to update and improve content on the highways website to make it easier to navigate and contain more useful information which would enable members of the public to self-serve and elected members would be able to better and direct answers to questions.

A cross party working group would be established to look into the members enquiry process and a large piece of work was being undertaken in collaboration with IT ensure that the enquiry system will be as efficient and effective as it could be. This would ensure members were better informed and able to communicate between services in the authority and members of the public.

Members were informed that positive transformation work was being undertaken centred around geographic processes such as reporting potholes. Whilst this was not expected to be a quick fix with a timescale of around 12 to 18 months, new technology would be utilised to update customers experience in reporting and being kept informed.

In terms of comparison of services with neighbouring authorities, it was identified that some were further forward in their IT development but that on a whole, Barnsley was in a strong position in the upper percentile of the quality of service it delivers for the lower quartile of what funding is available and ensuring good value for money for the residents of the Borough.

It was acknowledged that more than ever was being done in terms of support for the physical and mental wellbeing of employees with a variety of services on offer including a health and wellbeing pop up event that was held at Smithies Depot which was well received by all and welcomed as an annual event. Notice boards and takeaway leaflets were available for frontline staff unable to access the network to signpost them to various avenues of support alongside the GMB Union who could also refer people to the relevant help required.

In terms of the action plan targets timescales and measuring success, a full action plan had been established identifying what needs doing and the resources required to complete it. A full project plan will be created to sit behind each action and once completed this would be circulated to all members.

Members asked what the critical success factors were to delivering the action plan. In response, Areas of the emerging Action Plan which are critical to it's success included;

- Continued support from senior leaders and elected members
- Project resourcing
- Retention of key members of the Highway's team
- Clear and timely communication of progress, successes and challenges

Members enquired as to what information could be taken back to residents in what they could expect from the service in the next 3 months. In response they were informed that work would commence on the proposed website changes and that the system around pothole reporting would not change significantly but the way in which it is communicated to residents would be. The 12 month programme maintenance and schedule of work report, which included planned works on the roads, footways and drainage system around the Borough was already being made available to Members on a weekly basis and can be shared with residents.

In terms of service standards in responding to enquiries, it was recognised that the members enquiries inbox was not achieving the standard members required. Improvements identified were around communication and feedback to members in what and when something has been done in order for members to feed back to residents. Work was being undertaken in collaboration with the Digital Team and colleagues in the Digital Transformation Team look into what could be done. Members were informed that phone lines were still in use for those who did not want to or were unable to go online. The corporate service standards timeframe are set at 5 days for a response, whilst this could be achieved for a bin enquiry, the more complex issues received such as investigations into speed restrictions or requests for double yellow lines take more time to look into resulting in timescales being missed.

Members enquired as to whether the Peer Review Team had been to look around the Borough to look at the infrastructure and whether they had any comments. In response it was noted that on this occasion this was not a key focus of the review and that this visit was more for a review of the internal setting of the Service.

A possible solution to recruitment issues was raised around the recruitment of ex service personnel and whether this avenue had been explored. In response members were informed that the Local Authority had a good relationship with the forces recruitment service and there were a number of ex forces personnel working for the Service already. However, it was recognised that the problems surrounding the recruitment of bridge, traffic and civil engineers is in part due to the competitiveness of the Council's pay and reward package, Market supplements and other incentives, have and are being explored for future, it was not on a par with national salaries being offered.

Members requested that member visits be reinstated as before the pandemic so they could visit Smithies Depot and speak with members of staff. It was agreed that this would be arranged.

In summary it was acknowledged that the service was only as good as the recognition it received from the public and that one of the main priorities going forward would be the improvement of communications which would then enable the continued service improvement. Thanks were given from members of the committee and the Senior Management to all employees within the Highways department for their continued hard work and dedication.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) that the report presented be noted.

Chair

Report of the Executive Director Core Services to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 7 March 2023

Draft Communications and Marketing Strategy 2023-2025

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Communications and marketing activity is instrumental to the delivery of the council's services and promoting the borough. The attached draft strategy (Item 4b) is the guiding principle for how we do this effectively. It is a two-year plan which will be refreshed as part of the Communications and Marketing service review to be implemented in 2025.
- 1.2 The strategy is currently in draft format and has been brought to the OSC for consultation and feedback. Following this, it will be taken to Barnsley senior management team for consideration.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The way the council delivers effective communications and marketing activity has radically changed over the last ten years. The rise in digital technology and instant news has meant that employees within the Communications and Marketing team have had to diversify skill sets and approaches to make sure that they harness the new capabilities and opportunities available to the organisation and residents.
- 2.2 The pandemic has also dictated a new way of working for the team. Two difficult years of working in crisis mode have impacted the proactivity of our work as well as the ability to resource the number of requests for support coming into the team.
- 2.3 The team aligns with the [Government communications Service framework](#) and is governed by the government's [recommended code of practice for local authority publicity](#).

3.0 Current Position

- 3.1 The existing strategy was outdated and from a pre-pandemic way of working. A lot has changed over the last few years – the team structure is now more agile, and we're more digitally savvy with a clear focus on making sure that people are well-informed and can access information through a variety of well-managed channels.
- 3.2 An updated strategy is needed that reflects this and sets out the aims, ambitions, and approach.
- 3.3 The new draft Communications and Marketing Strategy focuses on delivering strong and effective communication with audiences to deliver a range of benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation, and improving community awareness of the council's programs, activities, and services.
- 3.4 The proposed strategy is informed by policies, procedures, and frameworks, which are guided by the council's own priorities and aims and recognises the need for strong and

effective communication. National and international developments are assessed against the communications strategy on an ongoing basis.

- 3.5 Projects are planned according to seven criteria: statutory, transformation, council plan and Barnsley 2030 ambitions, reputation, changes to services, significant harm to people, and communications and marketing service development activity. Projects within these criteria are then prioritised.

The Communications and Marketing Service

- 3.6 The team consists of ten full-time officers and one part-time officer in its core structure, who support directorates.
- 3.7 We also have ten full-time officers who provide dedicated support and activity to areas of high interest and where Barnsley benefits from having an expert professional in post. These areas include marketing our culture and visitor attractions, our wider town centre and The Glass Works, support to promote Barnsley's business, jobs and skills offer, and support for front-line services in our Environment and Transport service focusing on areas such as waste and recycling, highways, winter services etc.
- 3.8 We're all professionally qualified in communications, marketing, or public relations (PR) disciplines and all of our roles are politically restricted.

Core service offer

- 3.9 We provide the council with a range of services:

- Internal communications and engagement activity
- Communications activity
- Social media engagement and monitoring
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Marketing and attraction campaigns
- Media relations
- Brand and style guidance
- Advertising and sponsorship
- Reputation management activity
- Crisis and emergency communications

- 3.10 We're not responsible for the management and updating of the council's website, barnsley.gov.uk. This is supported by the Digital Team in Customer, Information and Digital Services. However, the teams work closely together on creating and updating content and making sure that there is an effective customer journey.
- 3.11 We procure our graphic design, videography, and animation services are procured through a framework of suppliers.

Strategic approach

- 3.12 We're in a privileged position that they have oversight of services from across the whole council, getting to see the synergies and using this to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion.
- 3.13 There are key elements in our work that often go unnoticed when people see the final products. We spend time using a variety of planning frameworks and models to create an

activity that is targeted and insight-led. This is embedded into our strategy and our work plans.

Workplan

- 3.14 Our annual communications and marketing work plan is a key enabler in delivering our Council Plan. It's set through business planning and reviewed every week, aligning with delivering our priorities and critical success factors.
- 3.15 We also have an integral role in supporting Barnsley's future and our long-term ambitions by delivering Barnsley 2030. We have a lead role in supporting the communications and marketing activity of Barnsley 2030, including developing a place marketing approach.
- 3.16 We're on track to have delivered nearly 600 pieces of work during 2022/2023, and this doesn't include the smaller jobs that we do every day.

Key channels managed by Communications and Marketing

Social media:

- 3.17 We currently manage six corporate accounts for the council: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and the newly created channel on TikTok.
- 3.18 Facebook is our main channel and where most of the engagement happens. In 2021/2022, we created 2,231 posts, reached over 13 million accounts, and engaged with nearly 600,000 accounts.
- 3.19 The council's Customer Service Contact Centre responds to direct messages on Facebook and Twitter.
- 3.20 We support services to run and manage dedicated pages. Examples of these include Libraries, Area Teams, Family Information services, and the Public Health 0-19 service.
- 3.21 We provide a comprehensive support service to both employees and elected members around online hate and abuse. We deliver this through the No Place for Hate campaign. Guidance has recently been updated and approved via full council.

Email marketing:

- 3.22 Last year, we implemented a new email marketing system called Gov Delivery hosted by Granicus. We use this service to send out all internal bulletins and we're starting to move external bulletins over to it.
- 3.23 10,500 people subscribe to emails and this is expected to grow when there is an increase in proactive marketing of the newsletters.
- 3.24 We're putting resources into expanding our subscriber base as email marketing has many benefits to the council. It can reach people instantly, we can target messages to people, it provides great insight and data, it helps to support our sustainability ambitions by reducing print and delivery emissions, and it's more cost-effective than producing widespread printed material.
- 3.25 The UK average open rate for email marketing is 36% (Granicus, 2021). Examples of open rates so far, are:

- Let's talk Friday bulletin for employees (03/02/23) –22%
- Let's talk Friday bulletin for elected members (03/02/23) –38%
- Our Barnsley weekly news for residents (03/02/23) was sent to 3,296 people - 53%
- February events at the Digital Media Centre (DMC) (31/01/23) – 50%
- Important information about Voter ID (27/01/23) 52%

3.26 When people subscribe to our emails, they can choose a range of topics that might be of interest to them. We track the engagement rates for this which show how many of our subscribers are interacting with our content and responding to our communication efforts over time.

3.27 The UK average engagement rate for email marketing is 69% (Granicus, 2021).

3.28 Examples of engagement rates so far:

- Barnsley museums – 50%
- Consultations, news, emergencies, and Council Tax – 77%
- DMC – 67%

3.29 The following link can be used to sign up for newsletters via the council's website:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKBARNSELEY/subscriber/new>

Barnsley Spotlight magazine:

3.30 The resident magazine was launched in December 2021. Three editions a year (spring, summer, and winter) are distributed to every household in Barnsley.

3.31 The content focuses on a round-up of the most important news from that period, as well as publicising events and activities from across the borough. Area teams each contribute to a page in the magazine to showcase local news. Pages of advertising are sold to Barnsley 2030 partner organisations which have included The Civic Barnsley, Barnsley College, NHS services and Northern College.

3.32 The magazine is FSC-certified which shows that it complies with the highest social and environmental standards in design, print and delivery methods.

3.33 For the March 2023 edition, we'll be creating a supporting email newsletter which will be sent out via Gov Delivery.

3.34 The following link can be used to read the magazines on the council's website:
<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/our-council/council-publications/>

News stories and statements:

3.35 We promote lots of different kinds of news from across the borough. The majority of these are in news releases but we also use other channels to share this information with people.

3.36 In 2021/2022, 411 media releases were sent out via:

- **The council's website** – www.barnsley.gov.uk/news
- **Social media channels**
- **Intranet news home page**
- **Let's talk bulletins for employees and elected members**, including employees who don't have regular network access due to the job they do.

- **Daily news bulletin** – sent to Barnsley Leadership Team, all elected members, and media contacts lists
- **The weekly Barnsley news email bulletin** – sent to everyone that subscribes.
- **Barnsley Spotlight magazine** – sent to every household in the borough.

Reaching our audiences

- 3.37 It's easier to reach people via a digital platform and the internet and people's ability to use it increases. The Office of National Statistics' latest data covers 2020 and shows that almost all adults aged 16 to 44 years in the UK were recent internet users (99%) and the proportion of people aged 75 years and over who are recent internet users nearly doubled since 2013, from 29% to 54% in 2020. This will have no doubt increased over the last two years, mainly down to the pandemic and the rise in people's use of online services for daily tasks such as shopping, reading, and banking as well as keeping in touch with family and friends.
- 3.38 There isn't a one size fits all approach to reaching different stakeholders and communities. This is why we always opt for a multi-channel approach guided by stakeholder analysis.
- 3.39 Digital activity is much easier and more cost-effective for us, but we still do produce and target traditional, paper communications to people when our insight shows us that it's the best method and we can justify the investment and return on spending. This insight includes service and partner intelligence, feedback from people who use our services, Mosaic data and industry-specific data. A recent example of our multi-channel approach has been the more money in your pocket campaign, where we've produced information in both hard copy and digital formats to make sure the help and support are accessible to everyone.

4.0 Future Plans and Challenges

- 4.1 The Communications and Marketing Strategy will drive work forward over the next two years.
- 4.2 The strategy will be refreshed again as part of the Communications and Marketing service review to be implemented in 2025. The service review will look at current roles and shape them to the needs of a future communications and marketing service.
- 4.3 To help with this, we're inviting the Local Government Association (LGA) to support with a free one-day health check of their work. This will happen in 2023.
- 4.4 We're also gathering data and intelligence from communications and marketing functions across both public sector and private sector organisations to benchmark and shape plans.

5.0 Invited Witnesses

- 5.1 The following witnesses have been invited to attend today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:
- Michael Potter- Service Director, Business, Improvement, HR and Communications, Barnsley Council
 - Katie Rogers - Head of Communications and Marketing, Barnsley Council
 - Alison Dixon – Communications and Marketing Manager, Barnsley Council
 - Cllr Robin Franklin- Cabinet Spokesperson for Core Services

6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

6.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What support have you had to meet the demands of the digital age? What more needs to be done?
- What are you doing to ensure residents with different communication and accessibility needs are not left behind in the digital age and that they are as well informed as other residents?
- How do you ensure value for money on outsourced projects?
- Over the lifetime of the strategy, are there any expected obstacles and how could these be alleviated?
- How confident are you that the strategy will ensure that the right people will get the right information at the right time? How will you know if you have been successful?
- Do you have sufficient resources to effectively deliver the strategy and what is the impact likely to be?
- How have stakeholders been involved in shaping the strategy?
- Can you give an example of how gathering data and intelligence from communications and marketing functions across both the public sector and private sector has shaped the strategy?
- Which elements of the strategy are you excited to see implemented over the next two years and what difference will they make?
- How do you know that you have an impact upon communities?
- Can you give an example of how communications and marketing is used to support behaviour changes and alter perceptions?
- How effective has the “No Place for Hate Campaign” been in fighting online hate and abuse? What has been the impact and how do you know?
- What factors does the insight data take into account when considering the best communication method?
- How is the work delivered by communications and marketing measured and what is this performance saying about your service?
- What will the health check from the Local Government Association entail? What value will it add?
- What can members do to support the work of the Communications and Marketing team?

7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

7.1 Item 4b - Draft Communications and Marketing Strategy for 2023/2025 (attached)

8.0 Glossary

DMC	Digital Medica Centre
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
LGA	Local Government Association
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny
PR	Public Relations

9.0 Officer Contact

Jane Murphy/Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officers, Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk
27 February 2023

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Our Communications and Marketing Strategy

2023-2025



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.

Our Communications and Marketing strategy focuses on delivering strong and effective communication with our audiences to deliver a range of benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation and improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

It's a two-year plan which will be refreshed as part of the implementation of the Communications and Marketing service review to be implemented in 2025.

The council is not alone in this narrative; we deliver this as a place: Barnsley – the place of possibilities. Our audiences see Barnsley as a place that builds back better and looks to the future with excitement and optimism. We want to instil this enthusiasm and inspire everyone to be the best they can be because our borough is a place that fosters and grows ambition.

Our Narrative

In Barnsley, we want everyone to have a good life. This means everything from a quality place to call home to good physical and mental well-being and a sense of self-worth through diverse and secure employment opportunities. It's also about accessing the best possible local facilities in a community that values our people and place.

In Barnsley, we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and, most importantly, achieve their potential.

Barnsley aims to be an ideal place to live and a great place to do business. We want to retain and attract new people and businesses to the area, creating an inclusive and diverse community enriched with skills, knowledge and experiences. We want to meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future and encourage people to connect to each other and our place.

This is why our vision for 2030 is: 'Barnsley - the place of possibilities'

It's time to believe in the possibilities of Barnsley, to look to the future with excitement and optimism. Our borough is a place that fosters and grows ambition, enabling everyone to be the best they can be.

Our role

The council is part of our communities. We're everywhere our community lives, works and plays every single day. We believe in Barnsley and want to share this passion and pride with our audiences.

We communicate and engage, so our audiences are well-informed. We establish trust and manage our reputation by helping our audiences to understand our business and our services, how we make decisions, and how we plan for the future.

We aim to give people the information they need to make the right choices for their lives and provide a platform for encouraging positive behaviour across the borough.

We recognise that strong and effective communication with our audiences can deliver various benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation and improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

Delivering information in line with our aims and principles, we build relationships with the borough's community channels to share successes and aid understanding about what we do, why we do it, and how we can work together to support our communities.

Our aims and objectives

- **We're inspiring Barnsley** - our activity supports everyone to benefit from and contribute to, making our borough a thriving place of possibilities.
- **We're part of our communities** - we celebrate good news and support people to achieve the things that most matter in our community.
- **We're building community capacity** – we engage Barnsley's local channels and groups and share information to make a real change in people's lives.
- **We're promoting Barnsley** – our marketing showcases all that Barnsley has to offer, attracting people into the borough.
- **We're innovative and forward-thinking** – harnessing the council's design principles to engage people and using best practices to influence our approach.
- **We're enabling our employees to be even better** – our employees are advocates and champions in their communities because they know about our projects, services, activities and decision-making and live the values and behaviours of the organisation.
- **We're building a strong brand and style** - we're identifiable to our communities with a brand and style that reflects our values.

Our principles

- We're a trusted organisation with a human voice.
- Our brand is reinforced by telling the story of our activities and the services we provide. We show how this supports Barnsley's future.
- We drive positive behaviour change across the council and our communities.
- We work with our place partners to maximise the opportunities and impact of our activity.
- Our activity is open, relevant, and timely, and we manage people's expectations.
- Our audiences understand how the council makes decisions and how they can get involved in decision-making. We explain our challenges so people can understand and trust what we tell them.
- Our activity is accessible - we use various channels and formats to make sure everyone can access and engage with us.
- We use insight and data to understand what's happening, which helps us target our activity and find the best approach.
- We promote a positive online experience and proactively challenge negativity.
- We dispel myths and correct misinformation, providing reassurance wherever possible and appropriate.

Our strategic approach

Local priorities

Our strategic approach is based on delivering local priorities in our [Council Plan 2021-2024](#) and [Barnsley 2030 strategy](#) while maximising the local benefit from national government initiatives.



Council Plan

Our communications and marketing strategy is a key enabler in delivering our Council Plan. Our narrative brings to life the priorities and enables people to see progress across the borough.

Barnsley 2030

We have an integral role in supporting Barnsley's future and our long-term ambitions by delivering Barnsley 2030. We have a lead role in supporting the communications and marketing activity of Barnsley 2030, including developing a place marketing approach.



Wider priorities

Working alongside our three-year Council Plan and our ten-year place plan, we'll track national and international developments and decisions and reflect on how they might change the direction of our strategy and approach. Key areas include:

- Budget settlements and funding streams
- Changes to national policies
- Publication of papers on social care services
- Levelling up agenda and plan for the North
- Impact of EU Transition
- World-wide political unrest and humanitarian aid
- Harnessing digital platforms and skills
- Transport and infrastructure investment
- Climate change and sustainability

Our core offer

We provide the council with a range of services:

- Internal communications and engagement activity
- Communications activity
- Social media engagement and monitoring
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Marketing and attraction campaigns
- Media Relations
- Brand and style guidance
- Advertising and sponsorship
- Reputation management activity
- Crisis and emergency comms

We are not responsible for the management and updating of our website, barnsley.gov.uk. This is supported by the Digital Team in Customer, Information and Digital Services. We do work closely with the team on creating and updating content and make sure that we have an effective customer journey.

We procure our graphic design, videography and animation services through a framework of suppliers.

Our key corporate channels

Digital:

- **Social media** - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.
- **Our website** – www.barnsley.gov.uk – we have specific pages for our news stories www.barnsley.gov.uk/news
- **Our daily news bulletin** for Barnsley Leadership Team, Elected Members and accredited media agencies.
- **Our weekly news email newsletter**
- **Our email newsletters** - you can sign up for our newsletters via our [website](#).
- **Schools email bulletin** sent weekly to all schools.

Traditional

- **Barnsley Spotlight magazine** - You can read our magazines on our website: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/our-council/council-publications/>




Internal communications







- **Let's talk weekly email bulletins** for employees, managers and elected members
- **Intranet news updates**
- **All user emails**
- **Sarah's blog** – weekly blog from the Chief Executive
- **Let's talk** all staff and elected members face to face and virtual sessions



Communications and Marketing Priorities

Our Communications and Marketing delivery plan sets out our activity and enables us to prioritise work according to priority and impact. The plan includes activity from across the organisation and the borough and seeks to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion.

Our key priority areas of work over the next two years:

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Barnsley 2030		<p>Communicate the progress against the priorities, showcasing how we're all working to make Barnsley the place of possibilities, telling stories from across our sectors and communities.</p>
Enabling Barnsley programme		<p>Communicate how employees can get involved in helping us be a modern, inclusive, efficient, and high-performing council. We'll make sure their voice is heard, feel empowered to do a great job and communicate the support opportunities available so they can be the best they can be.</p> <p>Delivery activity aligned to the council's Enabling Barnsley programme covering our transformation activity, our vision, culture and values, our Medium Term Financial Strategy, our People Strategy and our Asset strategy.</p>
Investment and development projects across the borough		<p>Professional support to develop and deliver communications and marketing strategies for major investment projects supporting Barnsley's economy to thrive so we have better homes, jobs, services, and transport links.</p> <p>Projects include Market Gate Bridge, SEAM campus, Youth Zone and Barnsley Futures bid, principal towns and local centres, Goldthorpe Towns Fund, and continued delivery of investment sites across the borough.</p>

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Town centre and The Glass Works		Dedicated resource to develop and deliver a communications and marketing strategy that supports the development of the town centre, focusing on creating a town centre narrative and brand and marketing of The Glass Works.
Marketing Barnsley as a destination		Link with local, regional, and national stakeholders to position Barnsley as a place to live, work and visit. We are showcasing our location, assets, and attractions to encourage people and businesses into the borough.
Investment in Principal Town and Local Centres		Use storytelling techniques to tell the story of our investment into Principal Town and Local Centres. We are concentrating on evidencing our thriving high streets with pleasant and safe experiences where people are proud of and look after their local environment.
Children's development plan		Work with Children's Services to communicate the development plan's outputs and show how children's services are building on their strengths and transforming services in the borough.
Adult Social Care		Support adult social care services with a range of communications and marketing activities with a focus on supporting the Better Lives programme to change the perception of adult social care services and how we talk about accessing support to help people enjoy life in good physical and mental health. We will signpost people to information, awareness of services, promote independence, and recruitment into the sector under the proud to care campaign.
Zero carbon and sustainability		Work with services to create a strategic communications response to support the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045 and the council by 2040. This will include engaging people to consider positive behaviour changes while supporting the broader promotion of sustainable initiatives across the borough.

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Jobs and skills		<p>Develop and deliver a communications and marketing strategy to showcase ways to access support, promote success stories to help raise aspirations, and promote opportunities to encourage uptake and development of roles. We will lead the launch of a borough-wide jobs campaign to showcase the meaning behind having a job and career, the skills they use and the benefits that being employed bring to people and their families.</p>
Integrated Care Services		<p>Input into a partner-led work programme to deliver the Barnsley health and care plan. Support central communication and marketing resources to deliver activities relating to integrating care services, so people can get the right care and support they need at the right place for them.</p>
<p>This is supported by the internal plans within the communications and marketing service:</p>		
Internal communication and engagement strategy	<p>Our strategy sets the way forward for how we engage with our workforce. The strategy supports our people strategy and Enabling Barnsley priority and focuses on channel development and content creation to keep a positive culture across the organisation.</p>	
Social media engagement plan	<p>Our plan focuses on channel development and content creation to maximise engagement with our communities and stakeholders.</p>	
Social media guidance for employees and elected members	<p>The refreshed guidance will support employees and elected members in their work roles and how to approach social media in their personal lives. It will detail the support we provide to people and how we manage our social media channels.</p>	
Brand strategy and style guide	<p>We have a strong, recognised brand and we need to make sure we're using it to its full potential. Our refreshed brand and style guide will provide employees with more support and guidance on using this.</p>	

Our delivery

Planning our work

We balance the supply and demand for our communication and marketing resources, including people and dependencies, using the Council Plan to inform and prioritise our work. We'll work with our employees, partners and communities.

We have an agile annual work plan developed by communications and marketing specialists through the council's business planning process. All proactive and planned work is linked to our council plan ambitions and helps to deliver our priorities and critical success factors. We regularly review our work plan to check priorities and to accommodate strategic planning headspace and unplanned work.

Where we have resources to support work, there needs to be a tangible link to Barnsley and our borough in the proposed activity.

We prioritise work using the following criteria. Work under these seven areas will take precedence when allocating our resources.

- **Statutory** - Support the delivery of the council's statutory obligations or Government/official body protocols and guidance.
- **Transformation** – Directly linked to the effective delivery of the Enabling Barnsley Transformation programme, including the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, People Strategy and Asset Strategy.
- **Council Plan and Barnsley 2030 ambitions** - Directly linked to our Council Plan and Barnsley 2030 ambitions and helps to deliver our priorities and critical success factors. This includes council-wide publications and platforms.
- **Reputation** - Has a significant positive or negative reputational impact on the council.
- **Change to service** - Engagement on policy changes or services that impact a significant proportion of residents.
- **Significant harm to people** in Barnsley- People need the information to make an informed decision on issues that could severely affect their health, well-being and safety. This is supported by insight and data to show the risk in Barnsley.
- **Communications and Marketing service activity** – Enhancing the team's existing resources and offers.

If activity requests do not meet these criteria, we will work with services to see how they can do this themselves.

We will always support reactive work which impacts our reputation or where people are at risk of harm.

Strategic communication

We deliver activities for work areas that support the council and Barnsley 2030 priorities. We make the links across the council and the place. Our activity is insight-led, contributes towards delivering objectives, is cost-effective and delivered at the right time to the right audiences.

Our strategy is influenced by policies, procedures, and frameworks and informed by our principles and aims. We align with the [Government communications Service framework](#), and we're governed by the government's [recommended code of practice for local authority publicity](#).



We use the SOSTAC© planning framework to structure our approach to campaigns and communication plans.

Our strong brand and style

Our brand and style guide helps to develop and refresh the Barnsley Council brand. Our brand and the Coat of Arms are the essences of Barnsley, bringing people together and connecting them to services to help people be the best they can be. A strong identity raises awareness of our services and makes them identifiable as Barnsley Council. We engage with employees to support and champion the brand to create an image of strength, trust and quality.

Budgets

We don't have a core budget for communications and marketing activity. Our activity is funded via service budgets. Specific strategies such as the town centre, culture and visitor economy and The Glass Works have marketing budgets aligned to them.

We can do amazing things with little to no budget. We use a variety of channels and our professional knowledge and skills to create activities to reach our audiences across the borough.

Audience mapping

We engage with a large and diverse range of audiences, including our employees. They're all important in different ways, and at different times, to the perception and promotion of council services and to maximising the future benefits for Barnsley. Most of the time, we're not trying to communicate with everyone. We use insight and data to target activity and the channels we use, thinking about who we need to reach.

Managing reputation

We work with services to identify potential risks and develop strategies that help to mitigate these while managing our reputation. We use a range of platforms to monitor and protect our organisation's reputation.

Internal communications and engagement

Our internal communication and engagement strategy is the catalyst to let our employees and elected members know what's going on and where we're headed in ever-changing and challenging circumstances for the public sector. It focuses on providing regular opportunities for them to engage in what's happening across the council.

Through various internal communications channels and opportunities to improve engagement with employees and elected members, people will see the connection between their role and our vision, values, and priorities.

We are driven by the council's People Strategy, ensuring we develop the right supporting organisational culture and behaviours and a modern, agile, healthy, engaged, skilled and innovative workforce to support the delivery of our strategic ambitions, improvements and efficiencies.

Behaviour change

Our strategic communications planning aims to identify barriers to desired behaviours and create communications and marketing activity that encourages people to act. Using the [COM-B model](#), we can effectively look at the capability of our audience, the opportunities they have to engage in the desired behaviour and the motivation for them to act.

As communication activities can't directly overcome some barriers, our strategic planning helps us target where our support impacts and where we need to work with other services or partners to overcome barriers.

Supporting community voice

We harness the fantastic pride across our communities to tell positive stories about the borough. We seek champions that empower people to tell their stories, champion their place and influence others.

Collaborative implementation

We adopt collaborative approaches across our departments, place partners and the Barnsley 2030 Communications Group. We leverage capacity within communities to share and amplify messages, increasing engagement.

We develop cross-sector activity plans addressing shared objectives and collaborate with public and private sector partners in communications and marketing activities.

Marketing

Our marketing campaigns include researching people's behaviour, capturing insight and data and promoting or selling a service to our audiences. We use our marketing expertise to target marketing activity to both customers and businesses, using cross-channel activity to maximise budgets, influence behaviour change and drive engagement. We work with services across the council and partners to join resources to maximise exposure.

Digital engagement

Our digital engagement work enables us to drive forward our use of social media and ensure that the channels, skills, and two-way communication with our audiences are up to date with new technology developments and digital trends.

Our social media policy provides our employees and elected members with the information and guidance they need to improve community engagement.

Our strategy champions positive behaviour on digital channels across Barnsley, and we run campaigns to showcase the standard and harness support. We are proactive in our approach to challenging unacceptable behaviour on digital channels through the No Place for Hate campaign.

Media Relations

We work with our media partners to create public understanding, build trust and promote good news. We seek opportunities to work together to strengthen our reach and impact.

Communication in major and critical incidents

Our communications major or critical incident plan is robust, focusing on warning and informing people during and after a major or critical incident. This ranges from adverse weather to potential cyber threats and global health pandemics. Our close relationships with key responder agencies and the South Yorkshire Resilience Forum help to drive this forward.

Learning from experiences

We know that our work has an impact on our communities. We strive for continuous improvement, reviewing our communications and marketing approach to make sure we're on the right path and looking for future opportunities.

Each campaign and plan have evaluations against our aims and objectives and service and council-wide outcomes. We look at the activity's success, but we're a learning organisation looking at opportunities and how we can be even better.

We continuously look to the future and adapt our communications and marketing activity to reflect any opportunities or issues.