

## 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- 3.1 The existing strategy was outdated and from a pre-pandemic way of working.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](http://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

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