



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Rushcliffe Borough Council

External and internal communications strategy 2022- 2025



Information is one of the Council's most important 'frontline' services

Residents and all stakeholders need information about Council services, what's going on in the Borough, who to contact, what the Council is doing and more about services which contribute to their quality of life.

Residents pay Council Tax to Rushcliffe Borough Council; in return they expect a variety of services, delivered to a high quality, that meet their needs, in order to understand these needs the Council needs to engage with and listen to its residents.

The easier it is for them to access these services, or to find out information about what their Council Tax is being spent on, the more satisfied they are – and happy residents make for a happy Borough.

Ipsos MORI, and others, have carried out research which confirms that the more informed residents are, the more satisfied they are with their council.

And if residents aren't informed, there is a natural reluctance to engage positively with our services, our activities, our plans and our proposals, further deepening the rift between the Council and the community it serves.

There is also some information to suggest that residents are more likely to engage with a council where it is clear that residents' views are taken into account and where they feel they can influence decisions, in line with those made by councillors.

This means that the production of quality communications highlighting the strategic development work of the Council as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.



To be effective, this information needs to be timely and engaging, clear and accurate, inclusive and informative as well as utilising a variety of channels and mediums to ensure as many residents as possible are informed.

Not only is this critical to strengthening our relationship our residents and the communities they live in but it is also crucial to ensuring we continue to deliver our vision for the Borough, our priorities and our activities which have all been designed to meet the needs and desires of our residents.

Equally, keeping internal stakeholders such as councillors and staff fully engaged with a comprehensive range of channels is ever more important in an era when the COVID-19 pandemic has further changed the manner of where and how people perform their roles in the organisation.

It means this strategy, underpinned by its respective action plans has now been extended from its 2018-2021 version to now include an internal communications strategy, acknowledging the increasing need to keep staff, councillors and other internal parties up to date consistently and effectively to maximise these audiences feeling ever more integrated and connected to the Council's internal objectives.

Information is one of the Council's most important 'frontline' services

Our latest research shows that 84% of Rushcliffe's residents feel satisfied with their local area as a place to live (2021). The 'Putting People First' survey carried out by the Local Government Association showed nationally the figure for district councils stands at 55%. In addition:

The research also showed:

- 64% of residents think the Council keeps them well informed
- 83% of Rushcliffe's residents are aware of our event's programme
- 59% of Rushcliffe's residents are satisfied with the ways they can contact the Council
- 55% of Rushcliffe's residents trust the Council

The figures are just one indicator of the value we place on communicating with our residents to ensure they continue to be satisfied and feel well informed, we must ensure we continue to think creatively and explore new, and ever more effective, methods of communication.

However, we appreciate that residents are not our only stakeholders and that others, such as partners, businesses, other councils and in some areas central government and its departments, also need to 'hear' what the Council is doing.

In order to meet these differing stakeholder needs and meet the personal preferences of our residents the Council will continue to communicate using as many different methods and channels as it can.

It is generally well received by residents and a key source of information about the Borough and services provided by the Council.

It also publishes leaflets and brochures about the specific services it offers, such as the Rushcliffe Gardener magazine to garden waste subscribers with target specific audiences within the Borough.

We also use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels to publicise news and events in a topical and swift fashion – these sources of information are becoming more and more popular with our residents and new channels will be explored during the lifetime of this strategy.

All of our communications are written in clear English and designed with our residents in mind. The Council website www.rushcliffe.gov.uk is also a key source of information to our customers with over 50,000 visitors per month.

Our news stories are regularly featured in the local newspapers, on local radio and, less frequently, on TV – this is a vital part of getting our messages heard by residents who do not naturally engage with the Council directly.



Looking ahead

Our latest research shows that 87% of Council staff are proud to work for the organisation in a 2021 survey.

In addition:

- 96% of staff understand how their work contributes to the success of the organisation
- 93% understand the values of the organisation and how they are expected to do things
- 90% of staff think the organisation makes good use of their skills and abilities
- 85% of staff think Executive management are open and honest in their communications
- 84% of staff think the organisation manages change effectively

It saw a combined employee engagement score of 88.5%.

Over the life of this Strategy, we intend to increase the range of channels we use to communicate with residents to include Instagram and an electronic newsletter to reach even more residents.

We also intend to start using more engaging technologies such as videos and electronic polling on our social media channels, as well as continuing to develop strong, positive relationships with the local media outlets to ensure our communications reach a wide an audience as possible.

There are also a number of specific tasks to increase the transparency of our decision making processes and broaden the profile of our councillors within their local communities. We are also committed to engaging further with our residents through a large scale residents' survey and associated consultation activities to inform the future plans of the Council.

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to clear and consistent communications that meet the needs of all our stakeholders, assisted by an annual communications plan. It's vital that we talk to, listen to and respond to local people so that they feel informed and empowered, and are able to play an active part in local democracy.

Good external communications are vital if the Council is to enhance its already strong reputation. Effectively communicating with residents, engaging them in healthy debate, and meeting their needs as customers of the services we provide, are all important elements of delivering efficient external communications. To that end, we pledge to:

- keep our residents informed about the services they can access if needed and the development work the Council is doing to improve the Borough
- use the tools at our disposal to ensure residents' views are listened to and that Council priorities are clearly and regularly communicated to residents
- make our residents aware of the decisions being made by the Council and the ways in which those decisions can be influenced.
- engage further with Town and Parish Councils, health and other local partners effectively to signpost to their key services and updates digitally and in print to reach as many demographics as possible.

We pledge to:

- Maintain, refresh and introduce updates and channels that ensure key messages reach the audiences in the most timely and direct manner that inform or 'nudge' behaviour appropriately
- Ensure information links back to corporate priorities and where applicable assists the Council's policies
- Make the stakeholders aware of wider Council related news and information that assists them update their peer groups and communities accordingly.

Any external communication published in any format or on any channel will have due regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 especially with regard to objectivity, even-handedness and political bias.

Monitoring the effectiveness of this Strategy

Delivery of the tasks contained in this Strategy are monitored through the Council's internal performance monitoring systems as well as through a six-weekly Executive Management Team briefing which focuses around the data contained on the Communications Dashboard. The following measures are monitored directly:

External

- percentage of residents who feel the Council keeps them informed (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents who feel satisfied with Rushcliffe as a place to live (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents speaking positively about the Council (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents feeling they can influence decisions that affect their local area (residents' survey)
- the number of media releases produced
- percentage of media releases which generate further coverage
- the number of unique users visiting the Council's website each month
- satisfaction with the Council's website
- the number of transactions being completed via the Council's website
- annual rating of the Council's website from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm)
- the Council's Gov Ranking (digital media presence)
- the number of people following the Council on its social media channels
- the engagement in Council news across all social media channels



Internal

- the volume of unique open clicks for internal update for staff and councillors
- the volume of engagement in staff campaigns and updates
- the volume of stakeholders who engage
- Anecdotal feed back from stakeholders month to month to tweak and shape updates

Alongside the development tasks listed in this Strategy, the team will deliver an Annual Communications Plan each year. Large scale campaigns will have individual communications plans containing specific behavioural change measures alongside measure of coverage and effectiveness.



External Communications Action Plan 2022-2025

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Create short instructional videos/guides for key council services such as recycling, benefits, council tax and environmental priorities.</p> | <p>Continue social media 'advocacy' featuring front line colleagues and business owners in the Borough. 'A day in the life of' – waste, customer services, revs and bins and internal teams.</p> | <p>Increase promotion of residents email subscription topics and include replacement of Rushcliffe Gardener magazine to regular garden updates.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>To increase residents understanding of the Council's services, how to use them more effectively and aid their learning of why they are delivered in line with our policies and strategies</p> | <p>To ensure residents can relate to those who operate our services and gain insight into how they deliver value for money services.</p> | <p>Residents can access ever increasing digital updates direct to their inbox, educating and influencing further engagement with Council services.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Evaluation of the campaign with social media reach statistics</p> | <p>Evaluation through social media reach statistics and the debate and subsequent common queries it creates.</p> | <p>Volume of increase in subscribers on the channel to the new topics.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>July 2023</p> |

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Develop further social media campaigns, including sharing residents' photos of the Borough, developing Instagram/ Facebook story use during event and appropriate infographics for key council decisions such as council tax, budget setting and major projects.</p> | <p>Consider the skills held within the Media team and use training and specific project work to address any gaps. Specifically, it will include review of the Performance and Reputation team's capacity to address increasing accessibility and website demands.</p> | <p>Introduce an annual Local Government Association advised 'who reads what' survey to further inform content of communications to different stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>Drive engagement with residents on digital channels that are increasingly being utilised so they can relate to our services and democratic processes.</p> | <p>To audit and identify where the team's skills could be strengthened and where possible shared to increase learning and development of the team's wider communication attributes in line with industry trends.</p> | <p>To ensure communication updates to different stakeholders are fit for purpose and providing timely updates to inform and engage these audiences.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Volume of engagement over each year of the strategy with at least 10 trial updates during the first year of the strategy.</p> | <p>Volume of training and projects undertaken and subsequent audit of new or shared skills acquired that have led to new communications themes or content being created.</p> | <p>Survey completion and subsequent report of results from stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>July 2022</p> | <p>July 2023</p> | <p>December 2022</p> |

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Further develop annual communications planner to assist resourcing and focus of activity.</p> | <p>Include behavioural change campaigns in line with possible Environmental Bill key themes in 2023 and beyond.</p> | <p>Assist the development of new council website and communicate council's priorities more prominently whilst signposting further digital access to Customer Service functions across all Council channels.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>Week to week and month to month communications activities can be assessed to identify and prioritise updates so content can be ever more timely and informative.</p> | <p>In line with the Council's environment strategic priority, inform and communicate any service delivery changes of the bill to waste services.</p> | <p>Ensure residents and stakeholders can relate to and access a contemporary easy to use site that will lie at the heart of the Council's communication and engagement.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Week in week out reference to the planner in line with weekly team meetings.</p> | <p>Continual evaluation of communication updates across and the correct channels to to maximise reaching all residents on updates.</p> | <p>Delivery of new website including how the Council's priorities are communicated across the portal.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>January 2023</p> | <p>June 2024</p> | <p>May 2023</p> |

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Make more direct links between corporate and communications priorities.</p> | <p>Identify closer links with schools, YouNG, Positive Futures and other groups to connect further with new generations of Council service users.</p> | |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>Residents need to see cohesion between the two sets of priorities so they can continually relate to and understand why the Council prioritises the themes.</p> | <p>Ensure new generations of stakeholders are aware and understand the Council's role and how it can play its part in linking its services with other public sector partners and the community.</p> | |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Evaluation and monitoring of volume of references between the priorities.</p> | <p>Volume of projects undertaken and subsequent connections made with different groups.</p> | |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>May 2023 in line with launch of new Council website and priorities being ever more featured and aligned.</p> | <p>July 2023</p> | |

Internal Communications Action Plan 2022-2025

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Build on 2021 staff survey key findings to further guide content in internal updates.</p> | <p>Further staff newsletter and video features on staff from across the organisation such as 'A Day in the life' video 'behind the scenes' and 'Why RBC is for me' and their connection with the Executive Management Team.</p> | <p>Continue to identify ways of engaging staff and councillors to news and updates.</p> | <p>Balancing corporate messages with interactive updates that are relatable to staff and councillors in line with priorities and key strategies.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>Staff can see how their views in the survey equate into actions on approaches to themes and projects around the organisation and a 'you said we did' analysis.</p> | <p>So staff can relate to and find out more on each other's roles, contributing to the organisation's understanding and connections across its teams</p> | <p>Ensure these stakeholders are engaging with Council external news effectively and ever more aware of how residents are digesting and reacting to updates.</p> | <p>So staff can understand and connect with priorities and strategies in a way they understand with their day to day work at the Council.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Ongoing timely features in updates referencing the internal survey and how key findings are being implemented.</p> | <p>Volume of internal update features for each year of the strategy.</p> | <p>Assessment of weekly and other updates to ensure links and content to the updates are relevant and engaging with the correct tone and style.</p> | <p>Volume of updates for each year of the strategy.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>July 2022 and ongoing.</p> | <p>July 2022 - content already being delivered on 'why RBC is for me' with video updates to be developed and delivered by July 2023.</p> | <p>July 2022.</p> | <p>July 2022 and ongoing.</p> |

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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Review the Council's internal Brightsign and screensaver channels to relay relevant messages and use engaging digital content.</p> | <p>Review internal poster sites to further influence staff on key messages.</p> | <p>Assess video usage of staff newsletter and email such as with a round-up of compliments every quarter reflecting and recognising achievement and effort.</p> | <p>Further animation in newsletter updates for staff, councillors and town and parish updates to freshen accompanying static content.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>To inform and educate internal stakeholders on key messages in a prominent way at Council sites or their devices.</p> | <p>Ensure sites are prominent and regularly and timely updated to accompany digital communications on key internal events and updates.</p> | <p>To aid teams connection with the organisation and relate to when their work is being acknowledged. A follow-up opportunity to remind staff their work continues to be valued.</p> | <p>Make content ever more engaging so stakeholders can relate to topics and updates in a less formal way.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Regular checks in line with communications planner outlined above with diarised updates.</p> | <p>Checks in line with communications planner outlined above with diarised updates.</p> | <p>Quarterly updates in line with communications planner</p> | <p>Regular checks in line with communications planner.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>Regular updates continuing following on from 2018-2021 strategy.</p> | <p>Ongoing throughout the period of the strategy</p> | <p>Ongoing throughout the period of the strategy.</p> | <p>Trial animations begun in line with seasonal introductions being upgraded to regular features from July 2022.</p> |


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| <p>What are we going to do?</p> | <p>Annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence.</p> | <p>Work with the Employee Liaison Group and Workplace Health Champions on identifying staff to drive internal campaigns and goals.</p> | <p>Produce and evaluate content that focuses and engages on themes from the Council's Smarter Ways of Working Policy for staff.</p> | <p>Introduce reference to corporate values in line with HR updates in induction process.</p> | <p>Assess, identify and evaluate annual internal communication projects as another barometer to influence content.</p> |
| <p>Why?</p> | <p>To assist teams being engaged on different topics through a channel that takes seconds rather than minutes to respond to, aiding response and insight.</p> | <p>For staff to have ever greater roles and influence on ways to improve their time at work and identify wider wellbeing opportunities to benefit each other.</p> | <p>So staff can continue to relate to the policy and how its flexible themes can aid the balance of working across Council sites and other locations.</p> | <p>Annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence</p> | <p>So projects can be reviewed to ensure they are prompting sufficient, timely engagement and interaction with audiences and shape future work.</p> |
| <p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p> | <p>Diarised polls agreed with Service Manager and in line with communications planner.</p> | <p>Volume of individuals identified to take projects forward.</p> | <p>A minimum of five internal updates during each year of the strategy.</p> | <p>Regular review with the HR team.</p> | <p>Annual review reports.</p> |
| <p>Decision to be made by?</p> | <p>Introduced periodically from July 2022.</p> | <p>Ongoing from July 2022 in line with ELG and WHC meetings and updates.</p> | <p>Ongoing from July 2022.</p> | <p>Already included in existing induction process but reviewed annually to ensure values are up to date.</p> | <p>July 2022 with reports diarised for 2023, 2024 and 2025.</p> |




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