



## **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**11 November 2019**

## **Briefing Note: How we promote information to the public**

### **1 How we communicate**

There is a wide variety of methods for communication and we try and utilise as many of them as possible, to ensure we reach the maximum number of people. This document deals primarily with external communications, but we also use a wide variety of internal communications channels to engage with staff.

#### **1.1 Media**

Media can be an effective way to disseminate information but the results can be variable. Advertising is the only guaranteed way to ensure the Council's primary messages remain intact.

#### **1.2 Press conferences**

These are used extremely sparingly in order to maintain impact. They are usually necessary when there is a particularly big announcement which requires or is likely to attract a high level of media involvement.

#### **1.3 Media interviews**

Cabinet members usually undertake media interviews though, in some circumstances and with their agreement, staff might offer interviews where that is the more expedient or effective option.

#### **1.4 Press releases**

These are used frequently in order to ensure key messages remain in the public domain. Content is always focused on Council or partnership activity with the intention of informing members of the public about initiatives, events and developments in the borough.

#### **1.5 Social Media**

Primarily Facebook and Twitter, though the council also utilises Instagram to promote Love Northampton activity. This activity is often used to support more extensive activity via web,

press release, direct mail and so on, or to provide bite-sized chunks of detail to ensure key messages become established.

#### **1.6 Website**

The Council's revamped website was launched in November 2018 and its news section is used as a repository for council updates which are then promoted via a variety of methods, primarily social media. The top tasks tiles in the banner section at the top of the site enable us to highlight key issues at any given point.

#### **1.7 Direct mail and advertising**

Due to cost these are used sparingly for particularly hard-to-reach groups or communications which require heavy community engagement, though Council Tax demands offer an ideal opportunity to communicate with every household within the borough. Advertising is sometimes considered in local publications to promote events.

#### **1.8 Parish meetings and community groups**

Parish meetings or attendance at community groups offers the opportunity to engage directly with specific communities, where residents can ask questions and receive updates. It is often also a good opportunity to distribute printed materials without the additional cost of postage.

#### **1.9 Members**

Council members are clearly ambassadors for the Council and its work, and have the ability to access and inform sections of their communities which might otherwise be hard to reach. They are provided with as much information as possible in order that they can speak with authority when asked about Council activity.

#### **1.10 Staff**

Well-informed and engaged staff can provide an effective ambassadorial front-line role when dealing with residents.

#### **1.11 Voluntary and community organisations**

We deal with a wide range of local voluntary groups and community forums and they are encouraged to distribute and spread the word about Council activity.

#### **1.12 Internal channels**

The Council uses a wide variety of internal communications channels including:

- Internal newsletter
- Intranet
- Senior Management Team blog
- Senior Management Team briefings to staff
- Internal Communications Champions
- Managers' Sessions, DMTs and other team meetings
- Desktop screen splash
- Notice Boards
- All-staff emails

## **2 Engagement and consultation**

The council engages and consults with the public regarding many aspects of its work. This is usually carried out by individual service areas but where appropriate the Communications Team helps publicise.

A variety of methods are adopted for both engagement and consultation:

### **2.1 Forums**

Departments work with a wide variety of organisations including residents', community, and parish clerks' forums, park management committees, and voluntary sector partners, including regular meetings. These offer the opportunity to engage directly with the community and encourage participation in consultations.

### **2.2 Survey Monkey**

This is the Council's primary tool for carrying out consultations, coupled with publicity through an appropriate assortment of channels as detailed in the 'How we communicate' section above.

### **2.3 Email**

In some circumstances, consultation responses are requested via direct email, publicised in the same way as the Council's Survey Monkey work.

### **2.4 External consultants**

The council also makes judicious use of consultants where the situation dictates that this is the most appropriate mechanism.

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