

Kirklees Council

Communications Strategy

Update 2024

Contents:

Introduction: strategic communications	2
Part one: service development plan	3
Part two: business plan	6

Introduction: strategic communications

This paper is an update to the Communication Strategy (2022/23) and sets out the service's strategic and operational priorities for 2024.

The service retains its core mission from the 2022/23 strategy:

Our mission is to build a strategic communications function for Kirklees Council

Strategic communications are a means to an end. Across sectors and industries, the principles of strategic communications are employed to enhance reputation with audiences, are at the heart of marketing places, products and services as well as influencing behaviour. They are also the key to increasing reach and engagement which represent the bottom line of communications.

Strategic communications

The previous strategy described the characteristics of strategic communications and how they differ from traditional approaches (see table 1). These characteristics remain central to the approach for 2024.

Table 1: strategic communications summarised

Traditional communications	Strategic communications
Reactive	Planned
Information	Narrative
Elite	Grounded
One dimensional	Audience specific
Tactical	Coordinated
Broadcast	Relationship building
Telling	Showing
Brand anarchy	Brand discipline
Disposable	Enabling
Repetitive	Consistent
Siloed	Corporate
Press focus	Multi-platform
Linear	Evaluating, changing, improving

Communications Strategy

The strategy is in two parts.

1. The service development plan describes how the communications team is implementing a strategic approach to its work. It describes how the three key pillars of strategic communications are being developed. They are: narrative, reach & engagement and evaluation.
2. The second section is the operational business plan for the year, which describes how the service will prioritise its resources over the coming year and its planned schedule of proactive communications activity to support the council's objectives.

Part one: service development plan 2024

The service development plan includes the actions we are taking to strengthen the three key pillars of strategic communications and updates on progress since 2022/23:

1. Narrative

Audiences engage more strongly with communications that are part of an ongoing story. That is why strategic communications prioritise planned, proactive and campaign-led communications. This is in line with the LGA Peer Challenge recommendation for Kirklees Council to: 'Craft and tell your story, externally and internally; and put strategic communications at the heart of the organisation.'

Update on 2022/23 actions:

- **Annual business plan** - Agree and deliver a business plan that draws together the council's disparate activities, organises them within themes and sets up consistent messaging that will drive our communications.

Update: First business plan agreed, with 89% of content delivered as planned.

- **Campaigns** - Within the business plan, we will identify priority campaigns where we will focus our resources and promotion.

Update: Major campaigns delivered (and ongoing) on corporate priorities, including Voter ID, Blueprints and Cost of Living.

- **Methodology** - We will develop a new campaign planning methodology to ensure consistency of approach and execution.

Update: Campaign and communications plan methodologies developed, agreed and rolled out across the service.

- **Grid** - We will increase our planning range to control messaging, announcements and events.

Update: Communications planning grid delivered each week throughout 2022/23.

Actions for 2024

- Agree new business plan for 2024.
- Deliver content of business plan and planning tools.

2. Reach and engagement

An understanding of demographics, habits and values is essential to create engaging content that reaches target audiences. The communications service continuously analyses its channels and audiences to increase reach and engagement.

Update on 2022/23 actions:

- **Channel review** – *We will review all our current channels, their reach and effectiveness.*

Update: Social media content reviewed by reach and engagement.

- **Audience segmentation** – *We will use our data more effectively to build audience profiles around demographics, geographies and interests which will help us create content that engages.*

Update: Social media channels reviewed by demographics and location of audience.

- **Knowledge bank** – *With a greater understanding of our audiences and our channels, we will build resources to help the team plan campaigns that target and engage.*

Update: Channel planner developed to help team plan campaigns using insight.

Actions for 2024:

- Develop channel plans for each major social media platform to increase reach.
- Create personas for key Kirklees audiences to strengthen targeting.

3. Evaluation

The service aims to adapt and improve. We measure the performance of our campaigns and channels as well as sharing learning across the service.

Update on 2022/23 actions:

- **Evaluation framework** – *Our priority campaigns will be evaluated. Using the Government Communications Service framework as a basis, we will measure inputs, outputs and outcomes to gauge success and learn good practice.*

Update: Priority campaigns evaluated for reach and engagement.

- **Performance Indicators** – *We will routinely gather and publish data on our work and establish trends in performance. We will gather data on reputation and local opinions through the council's existing functions as well as generating our own.*

Update: Key indicators now regularly gathered on channel performance.

- **Learning** - We will set up forums within the team collectively to analyse campaign performance and identify lessons that can be taken into future campaigns. experiences beyond their own role.

Update: Quarterly whole-service performance meetings to share best practice and learning.

Actions for 2024:

- Add press, media, email and website reach to KPIs.

Part two: business plan 2024

Excellent communications rely on effective planning. A plan for priority campaigns and proactive messaging allows the service to deliver the key elements of strategic communications:

- Building narrative behind the council's corporate priorities (as set out in the Council Plan).
- Applying consistent messaging.
- Using channels and audience segmentation in the most effective ways.
- Encouraging brand discipline.

The business plan is presented in two sections below: priority campaigns (section 1) and proactive messaging (section 2).

Section 1: Priority campaigns 2024

We will focus our resources on campaigns that say most about the council's priorities and values. A campaign is the pinnacle of strategic communications, being objectives focused, proactive and using a range of channels to reach and influence the appropriate audience(s).

Table 2: shows the service’s priority campaigns for 2024 to promote the four Council Plan themes.

Council priority	Responsible	Priority Campaign(s)
Address our financial position in a fair and balanced way.	BP: Corporate and Internal (and various BPs) BP: Public Health and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 24/25 – consultation, budget setting, roll out of budget measures. • Cost of Living - ongoing support relating to energy bills, food and personal finance.
Transform council services to become more efficient and effective.	BP: Children’s Services BP: Adult Services BP: Adult Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Kirklees Futures (attainment and inclusion) including SEND Transformation. • Modernisation of Adult Social Care - work across health and social care system to help people live independently and focusing on prevention. • Public-facing elements of transformation priorities, including: Access to Services, Assets rationalisation, Technology Strategy.
Deliver a greener, healthier Kirklees and address the challenges of climate change.	BP: Environment and Climate Change BP: Public Health and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Action Plan • Environment Strategy • Waste Strategy. • Public Health / ICB messaging – focused on prevention.
Invest and regenerate our towns and villages to support our diverse places and communities to flourish.	BP: Growth and Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huddersfield Blueprint. • Dewsbury Blueprint.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Blueprints – Holmfirth, Heckmondwike, Cleckheaton and Batley.• Connecting Kirklees – bringing all works updates into one section of website and roll out of visual identity.
--	--	---

Section 2: proactive messaging 2024

Alongside campaigns, the communications service will deliver day-to-day communications that help the council achieve its goals. Though less resource-intensive than campaigns, the service will use the principles of strategic communications to reach and engage target audiences in the council's work.

Table 3: summarises the business-as-usual proactive communications the service will deliver for services in 2024.

Directorate lead	Proactive communications	Description
Corporate Services	Corporate priority campaigns	Promoting campaigns incl: Pride, South Asian Heritage Month, Yorkshire Day, National Inclusion Week, Remembrance, Black History Month.
	Major religious celebrations / festivals	Marking religious festivals incl: Easter, Eid, Passover, Vaisakhi, Ramadan, Diwali, Christmas, Hanukah.
	Elections	Statutory messaging, advice and guidance on voter ID, election count and results coverage.
	Public meetings	Promoting transparent decision-making: live tweeting Cabinet and Council meetings, publicising and explaining decisions.
	Mayoralty	Promoting the Mayor's work in the community.

Economy & Regeneration	Homes & Neighbourhoods	Develop relationship with tenant audience, including improved channels of communication, promoting service excellence vision and safety initiatives such as damp and mould, fire safety.
	Business Kirklees	Promote support available to Kirklees businesses.
	Planning and regeneration	Sharing major planning policy and applications and promoting regeneration outside Blueprints.
Environment & Climate Change	Cleaner and Greener Kirklees	Promoting and rolling out 'cleaner and greener' brand to tie in all operational services activity: waste, parks, highways etc.
	Culture and events	Marketing support for core council-run events: Christmas lights, Pride, holiday activities. Plus, develop and promote Creative Kirklees platform for marketing community-led events.
	Highways	Promote delivery of capital plan and roads maintenance (ties in with Connecting Kirklees campaign).
	Winter	Planning and delivery of adverse weather communications plan and development of @KirkleesWinter.

Adults	Recruitment	Marketing and promotion of recruitment campaigns for careers in social work.
	Libraries	Promoting services, activities and support available at Kirklees libraries.
	ICB	Support NHS campaigns in Kirklees, focusing on prevention.
Children	Safer Kirklees	Cover work of council services in communities and respond to incidents alongside Police. Promote public safety campaigns, including: domestic violence, knife crime prevention, Ask for Angela, water & road safety, hate crime, digital safety.
	Schools communications	Disseminating key council messages to schools and supporting with ad hoc PR and communications advice.
	Ofsted	Communicating the progress and outcome of inspections.
	Fostering	Supporting the service in recruiting foster carers and promoting work.
	School places / attainment	Guidance and advice on applying for school places and celebrating the

		achievements of schools and young people.
Communities and Public Health	Public Health campaigns	Messaging throughout the year in line with corporate priorities and national campaigns, including: healthy eating, vaccination, diabetes awareness, cancer and mental health.
	Wellbeing	Promoting services that support residents' wellbeing, including: KAL, social prescribing, mental and physical health.
	Place based working	Increasing reach and engagement of Place Standard activity.
	Asylum and migration	Managing messages around asylum dispersal.
	VCSE relations	Promoting joint working and celebrating the strength of the third sector in Kirklees.
Internal communications	Budget and service change	Corporate messaging on impacts of the budget for the organisation, services and staff.
	Staff wellbeing	Promoting support, advice and help for staff.

	Values	Programme of internal activities / events to celebrate the council's values, including: Pride, South Asian History Month. Working with staff networks to disseminate messages.
--	--------	--