

# ONE VOICE

## Communications Strategy

### 2014 - 2017



Caerphilly County Borough Council



A greener place to live, work and visit  
Man gwyrdach i fyw, gweithio ac ymweld



This publication is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.  
Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.

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## Introduction

Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to ensuring that the whole organisation communicates effectively and efficiently with stakeholders from all sections of the community.

Effective communication and engagement is critical if we are to deliver quality services and develop a two way flow of information between the council and our key audiences.

We want to ensure that our residents, partner organisations, staff, the business community and every other interested party is regularly informed, updated and engaged using a wide range of channels.

We are committed to being open, transparent and accountable in everything we do and communications plays a key role in promoting this way of working.

The way we communicate as a society is rapidly changing and we need to ensure that the council is in step. The media landscape is also shifting from traditional media to the exciting new world of social and digital media and we want to be at the forefront of these developments.

Now, more than ever, it is clear that we need to continually review and adapt the way we communicate and ensure that all parts of the organisation are aware of the importance of this dynamic approach.

Caerphilly is a modern, forward looking local authority and this communications strategy outlines our approach to ensure that we deliver accessible services, shaped by local people as we move forward over the next three years.



**Cllr Harry Andrews**

*Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council*

## Delivering effective communications for the 21st Century



*CCBC Communications Unit – a Gold award winning team at the 2013 LGComms Awards*

### What?

The One Voice communications strategy is designed to clearly set out the way the council communicates with a wide range of key audiences. It takes us from the reality of where we are now to the aspirations of the future. It is backed up by an action plan, which sets out the milestones along the way.

This strategy reflects the ongoing decline of traditional broadcast media and the steady growth of digital and social media as key channels for communication in the 21st century.

We are no longer living in an 'age of deference' where the public respond to messages from authority figures. This is being replaced by an 'age of reference' where people look to their peer groups for information and are less reliant on established broadcast channels to deliver key messages.

This is reflected in the growing popularity of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. These channels are transforming the way people receive and share information. They can also be used effectively to engage with residents and other key stakeholders.

This approach reflects the council's desire to ensure residents can engage with us in new, improved ways, using new technology as a preferred method of communication.

### When?

The 3 year strategy runs from 2014 to 2017 and is co-terminus with the council's Corporate Improvement Plan, but the scale and pace of change means we will need to carry out regular reviews to ensure we are moving in the right direction.

This will help us check whether the action plan is on track and work out what corrective action is needed if it is not.

## Why?

Caerphilly County Borough Council is one of the leading local authorities in Wales. It employs around 9,000 people and serves a community of over 170,000 residents. The services we deliver affect every aspect of people's lives from birth to death, therefore it is vital that everyone gets the chance to be engaged with the organisation and find out about all the latest news and information.

Throughout 2013 the authority faced significant challenges in the face of criticism about its governance arrangements.

These issues have had a detrimental impact on the reputation and credibility of the council, therefore it is vitally important that a robust Communications Plan is in place to help restore confidence in the organisation going forward.

Caerphilly, like all other local authorities in Wales, also face unprecedented financial challenges over the next 3 years and effective communication, along with extensive community engagement will form a key part of managing this difficult process.

## Improvement Plan

The council has a three year Improvement Plan which sets out the key priorities to be delivered by the organisation.

*The Improvement Objectives for 2013-14 are: -*

- We are committed to ensuring children and young people who are looked after by Caerphilly County Borough Council are supported to achieve their full potential in a joined up way.
- We will improve job opportunities in our County Borough by implementing the council's Passport Scheme to create employment and training opportunities for young people.
- We will develop an effective and accessible Youth Service that supports the personal and social development of young people.
- We will improve awareness, access, variety and use of leisure, community and sporting facilities in our borough.
- We will transform council homes, lives and communities through our investment in the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- We will improve the quality and management of private sector housing for vulnerable people and work to reduce the number of residents who may become homeless.



The actions outlined in this strategy will be closely aligned to these Improvement Objectives because effective communications will allow all stakeholders to understand our priorities and engage with us as we deliver our services over the next three years.

Communication is about creating a dialogue. We have an opportunity to learn from others, to share excellence, to give direction, to celebrate success, to acknowledge weakness and to listen.

The One Voice strategy recognises the key role communication plays in helping to raise awareness about council services so that residents and staff are informed and engaged. They, in turn, can then have the opportunity to shape services and provide feedback on issues affecting their lives.

## Who?

The strategy will be delivered by the council's Corporate Communications team, but every member of staff across the organisation needs to take ownership of the principles underlined within the document.

People at all levels, from the Chief Executive to front line staff, need to be aware of the key role they play in delivering effective communications in everything they do.

The council's Cabinet (consisting of the Leader, two Deputies and 7 Cabinet Members) are key in this process as the corporate decision-making at this level will drive the communications activity of the organisation.

The Scrutiny function of the council also plays an important role and the Communications Strategy will reflect the outcomes and decision of the various Scrutiny Committees as well as Cabinet and Full Council decisions.

In terms of who we are communicating with on a broader level, our key target audiences include, but are not limited to:

- Residents from all sections of the community
- Employees of the council
- Elected Members
- Key partners
- Welsh and UK Government
- Voluntary Sector
- Local business community
- Trade Unions
- Media



## How?

The way we communicate is constantly changing and the developments seen over the last few years in social and digital media means that organisations need to work hard to respond and adapt to this fast pace of change.

**Digital by default** - There has been a major shift to online communication channels over recent years. This has many advantages over more traditional channels, especially in terms of cost, speed and sustainability.

A SOCITM study has highlighted the followings costs of dealing with customers -

- £8.62 face-to-face
- £2.83 telephone
- £0.15 online

In order to capitalise on this new approach, the council is now using new ways to communicate with local people. The use of Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook have become the norm for people of all ages and this is now a quick and efficient way to reach a large audience and have conversations in 'real time'.

That said, we need to be mindful of inclusion and consider the needs of those sections of the community who do not have access to digital channels. Whilst we are promoting the use of digital by default, we also need to make provision for those who prefer to use more traditional channels of communications



This strategy covers a range of key areas of communications including:

- Media Relations
- Social Media
- Advertising
- Graphic Design
- Print Services
- Publications
- Internal Communications
- Events
- Twinning
- Public Engagement
- Brand Management/Corporate Identity
- Crisis Communications
- Campaign Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation

## Equalities and the Welsh language

All our Communications activity will comply with the requirements of the authority's statutory duties under Equalities and Welsh language legislation.

In doing so, therefore, all of the Key Communication Channels shown later in this document will be undertaken bearing in mind the Equalities and Welsh language requirements. The Communications Unit will work closely with the Equalities and Welsh Language Team to ensure this works effectively and in a practical way.

The council is committed to representing the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community and our communications output must reflect this.



## Our Story - Where are we now?

The One Voice strategy will help the council create and deliver a narrative about its core values and aspirations for the future. This narrative will be communicated to all stakeholders through all our communication activities.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is keen to be seen as an organisation that:

- Is committed to delivering its Improvement Objectives.
- Is about people, about place, about delivering quality services.
- Is an ambassador for the county borough that prides itself on setting a good example through the way it conducts its 'business'.
- Governs an area that is a 'greener and cleaner place to live, work, visit and invest'.
- Is efficient and effective in managing its resources in times of austerity.
- Recognises that its staff are at the heart of its 'business' and strives to make sure that every employee is fulfilled in their role.



### Perception of council services

The 2013 Household Survey involved a questionnaire being sent to 10,000 residents across the county borough.

82% of respondents were satisfied with the overall service provided by the council - which is higher than our target of 78%.

- There has been an improvement since 2011 in the proportion of respondents who feel the quality of life in their neighbourhood and local town centre has got better during the last 12 months.
- There were high levels of satisfaction with leisure, learning and cultural activities, particularly Llancaiach Fawr, the Winding House Museum and country parks.
- Dog fouling, the condition of pavements/walkways and litter/waste accumulation were the biggest problems that respondents felt affected the appearance of their streets.

### Social Media Use (March 2014)

- CCBC Facebook . . . . . 25 accounts with a total following of 12,954 people
- CCBC Twitter . . . . . 34 accounts with a total following of 18,879 people
- Pinterest . . . . . 1 board with 38 followers
- CCBC You Tube Channel . . . . . 67,829 views of our videos
- CCBC Flickr . . . . . 1,350,219 views of our photos

### CCBC Website (January 2014)

- 3,888,019 hits to the council’s website each year
- 404,423 unique users

### Traditional media (Circulation - January 2014)

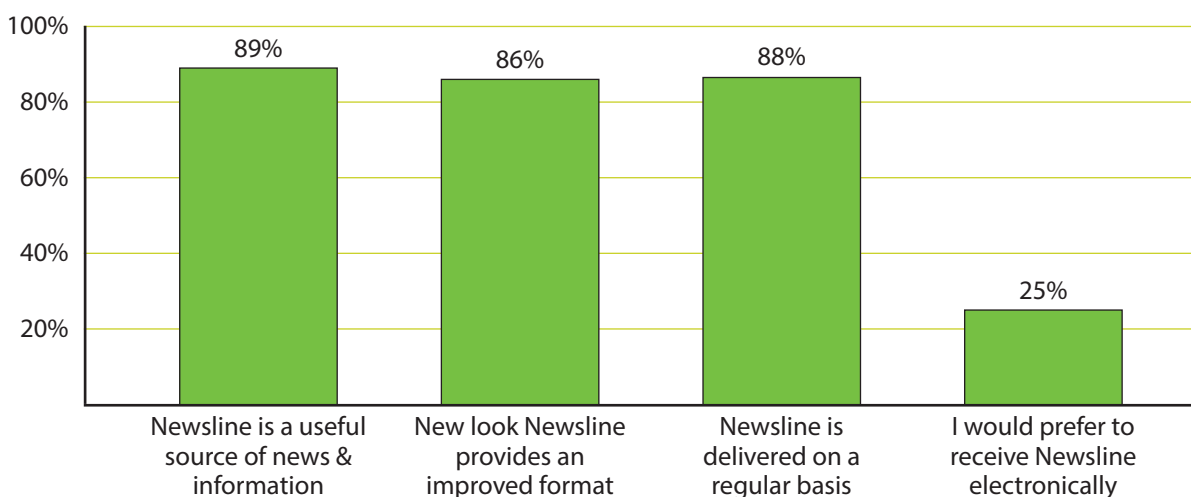
- Western Mail . . . . . 1,312
- Echo . . . . . 2,675
- Wales on Sunday . . . . . 2,099
- Rhymney Valley Express . . . . . 1,879
- Campaign . . . . . 34,264
- South Wales Argus . . . . . 4,157

### Newsline (January 2014)

- Circulation . . . . . 83,000 homes and businesses
- Editions p/a . . . . . 6
- Pages . . . . . 16 (8 english / 8 Welsh)

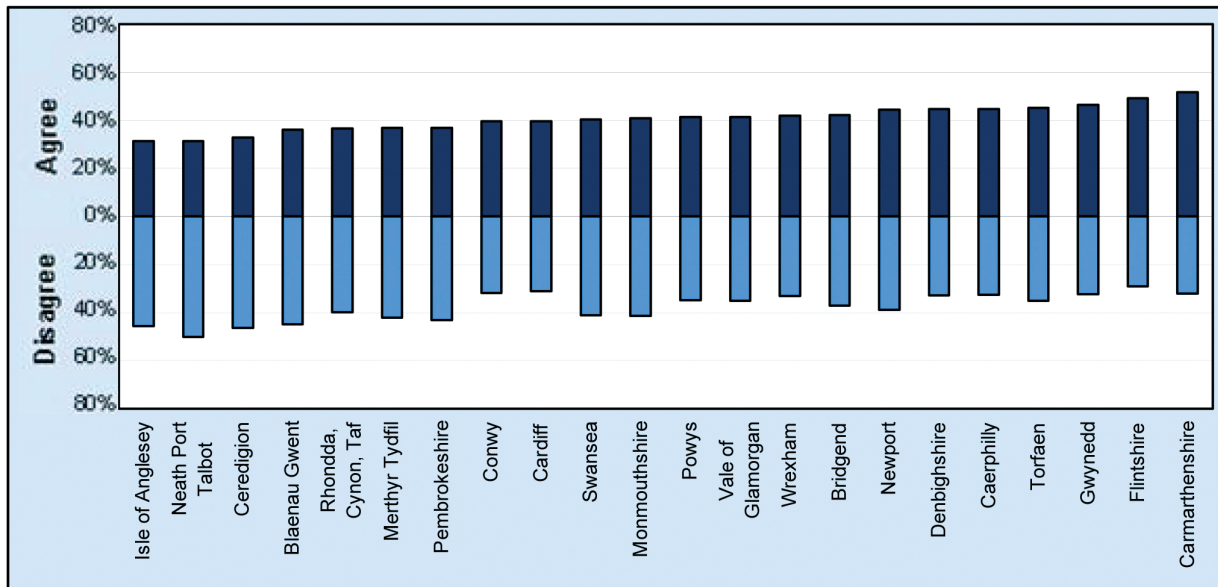


### Newsline Satisfaction (2013 Household Survey)

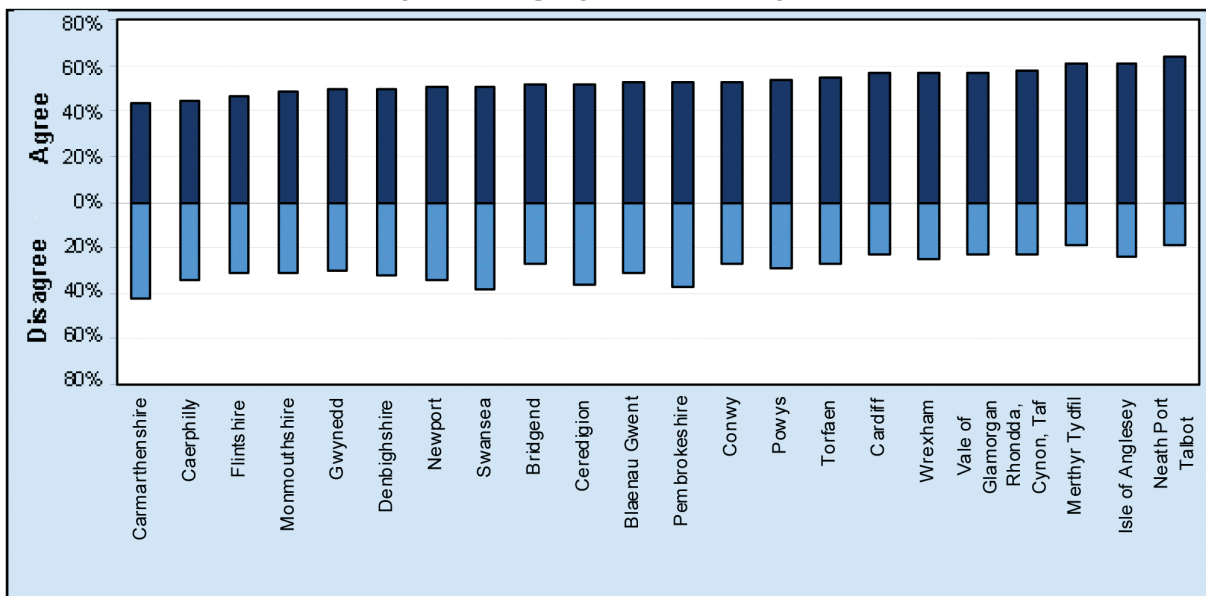


The following data is taken from the 2013 National Survey for Wales which is commissioned by the Welsh Government. The charts clearly show that Caerphilly performs well in terms of satisfaction with services and information provision:

**Chart 14: Proportion of people who agree or disagree that their council is good at letting local people know how well it is performing, by local authority**



**Chart 15: Proportion of people who agree or disagree that they would like more information on how their council is performing, by local authority**



## Measuring our success

It is vital that we effectively monitor and evaluate our communication activities as set out in the Action Plan.

Regular engagement activities such as surveys and meetings of the Viewpoint Panel will gather feedback from key demographic groups to help us measure success.

Key outcome areas:

- **OUTCOME 1** Increased levels of satisfaction about how the council communicates and engages with residents (measured in Household Survey)
- **OUTCOME 2** Increased levels of awareness about key services delivered by the council (measured in Household Survey)
- **OUTCOME 3** Improved internal communications within the organisation (measured through an employee satisfaction survey)
- **OUTCOME 4** Increase our network of followers across CCBC social media channels (as reflected in annual Ffynnon targets)
- **OUTCOME 6** Re-establish the Viewpoint Panel as a key engagement and feedback mechanism for the authority
- **OUTCOME 7** Generate more positive media articles (as reflected in annual Ffynnon targets)

Key actions:

1. A senior level Communications Board, with member representation, should be formed to develop, monitor, evaluate and assess communications and marketing activities.
2. Develop key internal and external communication messages which reflect the vision and values of the authority. The new priorities in the Improvement Objectives for 2013 - 2016 will provide the focus for key messages about the work of the authority.
3. To deliver a fully integrated internal communications system that ensures that the council engages with staff using a range of techniques regularly and makes sure that the employees are kept informed and updated.
4. The communications team forms and chairs a Public Engagement strategy group for council directorates. This will aid the understanding of who is doing what and where their work fits in to the bigger 'county borough' picture.
5. Training and development will be provided for senior officers, Cabinet members and Scrutiny Chairs around the new communication approaches so that key messages are shared and understood right across the organisation

## How can we communicate better?

We will do this by developing:

- Better understanding of the role and methods of modern communications
- Better management of Caerphilly County Borough Council's reputation
- Better targeting and accessibility of communications
- Better two-way communications

**Role:** This communications strategy, through the action plan, supports the council's vision, mission, corporate priorities and Cabinet commitments, as set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan. It will build on the council's reputation, placing communications on every agenda to ensure the right people know the right information at the right time, whether that is in order to access a service or to influence the development of a policy. There is no one perfect method of communication – a range of methods needs to be used effectively.

**Reputation:** Caerphilly County Borough Council has a strong community leadership role and to maintain this requires a reputation for honesty, trustworthiness, efficiency and most importantly doing what we say we'll be doing. Communications alone cannot build or maintain a reputation. We need services, policies and facilities to be excellent and we need staff and councillors to be our ambassadors, taking pride in the council and its work. This is particularly important in light of recent controversies involving the authority.

**Targeting:** It is relatively easy, given the sufficient resources, to send out lots of information and get blanket coverage. It is harder, but increasingly essential, to target information at specific audiences, including those who are often harder to reach with traditional communications methods. We are required by law, and have a duty as a caring authority, to ensure our communications are as widely accessible as possible. All our communications in the coming years need to take accessibility into account and we need to be smarter at reaching our target audiences.

**Two-way:** We need feedback from those who use our services and will be affected by our policies before we can design them properly. A new Citizen Engagement Strategy was adopted by the council in 2013 and this will shape the way we consult with stakeholders in the future. People need to know not only that they have been listened to but also what changes have been made as a result or, if no change is made, why this is necessary. Two-way communication is essential to build trust and mutual understanding.

### Responsibility for Communications

The Communications Unit will carry out the day-to-day management of the strategy. Communications will also be a priority for Cabinet, CMT and Heads of Service. The overall responsibility for its successful implementation, however, rests with each and every member of staff, together with elected members. Our staff and our elected members are our ambassadors and play a crucial role in delivering the corporate narrative.

## Corporate Management Team (CMT)

CMT will be responsible for driving the Communications Strategy by actively applying its principles to all aspects of their work. They will communicate their decisions, and the strategic thinking behind them, clearly and quickly to the Heads of Service and other key staff. They will also ensure that 'communications ability' is included as a key competence in the annual appraisal of all Heads of Service.

## Heads of Service

This key tier of management will take responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation of the Communications Strategy within their areas of responsibility. They will also:

- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of and act upon the Communications Strategy
- Provide regular feedback to the Communications Manager through the quarterly media planner
- Provide regular feedback to their own Director through the Management Team meetings to provide an upward flow of information as well as the more usual top-down procedure
- Provide information to, and liaise with, elected members within the guidelines of the established protocol
- Advise and recommend on future planning for communications issues
- Where relevant, make 'communications ability' a key result area in Performance and Development Review discussions

## Principles underpinning the strategy

As we take steps to improve communications across the Council we need to have a firm foundation, a set of agreed principles on which we can act. These should be the bedrock of our future activity and act as a guarantee that our actions are sound and that they fit the values of the Council.

**Staff first:** Staff should be well informed about issues which affect the organisation and impact upon them as employees. Being well-informed means they can participate fully in our drive to be an excellent Council and an employer of choice. In all our communications activity we will endeavour to provide staff with access to information in advance of the media and the public. Only then can we demonstrate that our staff are valued as employees and ambassadors for the Council.

**Good communication is everyone's responsibility:** Every employee is involved in communication activity whether formal or informal as an integral part of his or her job role. Whether this involves internal or external communications, all employees need to take responsibility for ensuring they communicate clearly and effectively.

### **Effective internal communication drives culture change and performance**

**improvement:** Internal communications is therefore not seen as an 'add on', an activity that is voluntary or a luxury when budgets are tight. Without it, we will not become the Council we want to be. Communications in Caerphilly is part of an overall strategy to improve performance and service delivery.

**Managers need to back their commitment to corporate communications:** This requires action to break down any 'silo' mentality which may exist, a willingness to use directorate and divisional resources in a different way, and to sign up to corporate messages and communications standards.

## **Our commitment to deliver effective communications**

As a council we will:

- Promote open and honest, two-way communications
- Ensure that all communication is:
  - clear
  - non-technical
  - easily understood
  - timely
  - up to date
- Publish material that meets the corporate style and is easily and instantly identifiable as originating from the council.
- Share information across all directorates.
- Achieve agreed Equalities and Welsh Language standards in all our communications.
- Provide access to services via a variety of channels to meet the various needs of our residents.
- Establish and maintain regular channels of communication with key stakeholders.
- Support a corporate culture of trust where innovation and continuous improvement is valued and encouraged.
- Share best practice, ensure best value, and provide the public with high standards of service.
- Support the aims and objectives of Caerphilly County Borough Council's Corporate Improvement Plan.

# Key Communication Channels

## MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Media relations, particularly in an increasingly digital age, plays a vital role in the delivery and execution of the communication strategy.

While it is acknowledged that both proactive and reactive media relations will inevitably form the basis of day-to-day operational activity, the following strategic aims will be cohesive factors.

### Strategic Aims:

- To communicate and promote the council's achievements, policy developments and details of service delivery to residents of the county borough and other key audiences through utilising the media - both traditional and digital - locally, regionally and nationally where relevant. In order to secure credibility, it is also important that we communicate any shortcomings and explain corrective actions that are being taken to address these issues.
- To engender an image of the county borough as a whole entity. In the 2013 Household Survey, for example, while overall respondent satisfaction of council services was 82%, this figure dropped slightly to 78% in the Upper Rhymney Valley area.
- To ensure media journalists, press reporters and community reporters seeking information and/or comment from the council receive accurate and timely responses to queries.
- To continue to utilise digital media, e.g. website, social media etc, to ensure that council news and information is generated, delivered, managed and responded to swiftly and efficiently.
- To continue to build positive relationships with press and media colleagues to maximise publicity opportunities and continue to develop trust and understanding of deadlines, confidentiality and council/media policies.

### Strategy:

Through the deployment of targeted messages via the media to identified targeted audiences, we will position the council as a leader in Wales in media management and in reputational terms to further increase confidence in council services in line with the 2013 Household Survey.

### Proactive Media Relations

To achieve the aforementioned strategic aims, the Communications team will work to ensure that regular activities will include the following:

- Through training and support, the backing of the Senior Management Team and clear performance management, the Communications Unit will encourage service areas, via the Communications function, to seek out good news stories and effectively communicate them to residents, partner organisations, colleagues and the media.



- Package good news opportunities to the media in an effective, easy-to-communicate form - to include researching, writing and issuing media releases on a regular basis when relevant, utilising social media, arranging photocalls and offering relevant photo/interview opportunities to the media.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Implement a programme of meetings with various management teams across the organisation to emphasise the importance/capabilities of the communications function, and consequently continue to build upon relationships in seeking out good news stories to communicate with the media and residents.
2014-15	Continue to work with colleagues across Wales to benchmark and share best practice in relation to media management.
2014-15	Continue to develop the quarter media bulletin as a 'first port of call' for submission of forward-thinking good news stories. Develop a means of feeding back to various service areas to communicate details of the good news stories generated as a result of the subject submission.
2014-17	Continue to utilise social media as a key means of communicating with residents and gauge their feedback on good news stories communicated by the council. This also offers a cost effective mechanism to gain insight into sometimes controversial decisions at the click of a button - in real time.

### Reactive Media Relations

In the age of openness and transparency, the media, as a facet which residents utilise to communicate with the council, have every right to challenge, and hold to account the council when levels of service fall below that which residents expect from the council.

The county borough is served by a number of local and regional media outlets.

#### **Newspapers include:**

- South Wales Echo
- Western Mail
- Rhymney Valley Express
- South Wales Argus
- Campaign Newspaper
- Caerphilly Observer

#### **TV outlets include:**

- BBC Wales
- ITV Wales
- S4C

#### **Radio outlets include:**

- BBC Wales
- Capital FM
- Real Radio
- Community radio stations such as Nation Radio

The prevalence of social media also means that reactive media, and the need to deal with adverse comments, has vastly accelerated the speed at which adverse news travels to a large number of people.

Inevitably, 'bad' news stories always generate more interest from the media – and the very nature of local government services makes all public services across the county easily open to criticism. One of the aims of this communications strategy is to counterbalance and effectively manage these negative news stories to ensure that news is communicated in a balanced, accurate and timely manner.

In order to be best placed to manage reactive media relations, we will:

- Continue to adopt a coordinating response to the media, by highlighting the importance of reputation management across the organisation, to ensure that media enquiries are dealt with efficiently and in an open and transparent manner.
- Continue to build upon developing working relationships with local, regional and national media and press colleagues.
- Highlight to managers the importance of communicating potential areas of impending negative/difficult situations which are likely to give rise to media interest/potential criticism from residents. Where time allows, comprehensive media management strategies will be developed to ensure that correct information is supplied in a timely manner.

**Priority Activities:**

2014-15	Develop an annual survey to be distributed to media/press contacts to seek feedback on the existing service provided (to include appropriate response times for the particular query).
2014-15	Ensure that an appropriate procedure is in place internally in terms of responding to media enquiries. Ensure that officers are aware of the importance of responding to queries in a timely manner to cater for the deadlines of press/media.
2015-16	Ensure that Cabinet colleagues are appropriately media trained so that they are best positioned to represent the council, its views and its aims contained within the Annual Improvement Objectives.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The Local Government Association (LGA) defines a 'crisis' as 'any action which is a significant threat to the operation of your business. These can be threats to public safety, financial loss or catastrophic reputation damage.'

### Strategic Aims:

In the event of a crisis situation, the Communications Unit, alongside the Emergency Planning Unit and council leadership, will play a key role in:

- Helping to make sure, through regular, timely communication, that public safety is at the top of the agenda.
- Acting swiftly in the dissemination of appropriate information to both the media and residents and answering queries in an open, honest and transparent manner.
- Being a bridge between the organisation and the public, ensuring that available communications channels are utilised appropriately, effectively and regularly.
- Utilising internal communication channels to ensure that council staff, and partners as required, are kept regularly informed with appropriate information.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is a key member of the Gwent Local Resilience Forum. The group have developed a 'Warning and Informing Generic Plan' which aims to provide strategic direction for organisations involved in communicating at major incidents or a situation where a multi-agency response is required.

In particular the document highlights methodology and good practice that would assist in satisfying the duty of Lead Responders (Gold) and supporting organisations (Silver) to warn and inform members of the public in the event of an emergency or major incident.

*The Gwent Local Resilience Forum 'Warning and Informing Generic Plan' is included as an Appendix.*

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Key communications staff to ensure they are suitably trained in Crisis Communications.
2014-15	Ensure that an up-to-date contact list is available and distributed to key communications staff in order to enable out-of-hours contact with the local/regional media if required.
2014-15	Ensure that Cabinet colleagues/relevant senior officers are suitably media trained to be in a position to conduct media interviews in response to an emergency/crisis situation should the need arise.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

The council has successfully embraced a number of social media platforms as an integral part of its communications mix for a number of years.

We recognise the opportunities that social media can deliver in terms of reputation enhancement, engaging with residents and businesses using their platform of choice, encouraging greater two-way dialogue and the insights that social media can provide, and as an opportunity to consider social media as a cost effective option versus a number of other communication channels.

The council's social media offering aims to work towards both informing and creating a two-way dialogue with residents on council services, information, news and events.

The service provides a vehicle for the council to engage with residents and stakeholders on a variety of topics, including service requests, and also has the capabilities to be used as a form of crisis communication during emergencies. Social media platforms also allow the council to promote its work and that of its partners and community groups. The council's social media platform is also used to share public health information from the NHS.

Posts on social media sites follow a framework of council activities, initiatives and events set in advance.

Other communication is reactive in response to posts by other users and organisations. While acknowledging the significant benefits that social media can and does bring, due largely to the immediacy and availability of social media outlets, it is important to highlight the potential risks associated with it. A key part of the work the Communications Unit undertake in relation to social media is around monitoring - both our own social media activity and indeed that of others.

Monitoring of social media channels continues to play an important role in us gaining a better understanding of the conversations that are being had about the council in which we are not currently participating.

At present the council operates five social media channels; Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr and YouTube. The council runs Corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts, along with smaller accounts dedicated to certain service areas or campaigns.

As of Friday 31st January 2014, The council's corporate Facebook page has nearly 5,500 followers and statistics suggest that, on average, the page's content reaches around 3,000 users per week, of which nearly 2,000 engage with the post.

The council's corporate Twitter page has 5,636 followers, while the Flickr channel has received more than 1,000,000 views.

**Social media targets:**

	12/13 actual	13/14 target	14/15 target	15/16 target
Facebook posts	977	1,250	1,500	2,300
New Facebook followers	3,643	2,500	2,000	2,000
Twitter tweets	1,859	2,350	3,000	4,000
New Twitter followers	2,505	2,500	2,000	2,000
YouTube uploads	120	120	120	120

These ambitious targets are with the caveat that new digital platforms are evolving all the time, and as a council we are keen to embrace the digital media channel of choice for our residents.

These targets will be altered accordingly should the council embrace a new, different digital media platform throughout the lifetime of this strategy.

**Strategic Aims:**

- To ensure effective two-way communication with residents and users.
- To act as a vehicle to promote council business, news and events.

**Priority Activities:**

2014-15	Implement internal social media access for CCBC staff to promote internal communications and engage with staff.
2014-15	Implement weekly video news update and share via social media to inform residents and stakeholders of council news.
2014-15	Use social media to host webchats as an extension of public consultations and the Viewpoint Panel.
2014-15	Continue to promote social media as a quick and easy method of engaging with residents in reporting requests for service through the creation of a #CaerphillyTweetpride initiative.
2015-16	Develop more efficient system to process social media service requests in collaboration with CRM.

# ADVERTISING

The authority operates an in-house advertising service. This ensures maximum value for all our advertising activities. It complements the other activities of the Communications Unit and enables a total communication package for service areas.

The council purchases advertising space in newspapers, radio and other publications to advertise job vacancies, to promote facilities such as leisure centres and tourist attractions or to place public notices required by law.

In order for the authority to maximise its purchasing power, advertising space is bought centrally - thus enabling higher discounts to be achieved than if each service area purchases advertising separately. At present, the average discount achieved with publications is 15%.

The Unit offers a professional advertising service with the remit to obtain the most effective advertisement at the lowest price for the client and to maintain a high quality of advertising, conveying positive and accurate impressions of the authority.

### Strategic Aims:

- To ensure effective corporate advertising of job vacancies, facilities and services.
- To ensure value for money in advertising spend.
- To ensure target audiences are reached.
- To ensure all advertisements convey a consistent image of the authority, whether they are adverts for jobs or promoting a service.
- To ensure all adverts comply to CCBC's branding guidelines
- All advertising to must be placed through the in-house agency operated by the Communications Unit.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Carry out customer satisfaction survey. To evaluate responses to job vacancies.
2015-16	Liaise with various titles with a view to renegotiate corporate advertising discounts.

## DESIGN SERVICES

Making a good first impression is critical in establishing a relationship with a target audience and communicating objectives. Developing a professional image and attractive visual communications is an essential part of an effective marketing strategy.

Creating professional, efficient, imaginative, cost effective and trustworthy design solutions will assist the council, directorates and its services to communicate effectively and help customers to identify with the CCBC brand.

The design services team focus on designing marketing materials that will best represent council services to a target audience and help accomplish their goals. We use our graphic design expertise to design custom materials that establish a consistent, professional image.

We specialize in graphic design for a wide array of materials including brochures, business cards, logo design, annual reports, newsletters, letterhead, presentation folders, postcards, posters, flyers, exhibition stands, calendars, banners, signs, vehicle livery, websites, multimedia, and much more.

### Strategic Aims:

- Provide a helpful and professional design service to identify objectives, create strategies and implement them with a range of design, advertising, branding and marketing projects.
- Continue to build positive relationships with all council service areas and partner organisations to ensure a consistent and effective CCBC message is delivered to the public.
- Continually monitor and police all public facing and internal communications ensuring all materials adhere to professional design practises and our Corporate Identity Guidelines.
- Work in tandem with the council's Policy Unit to advise staff on where Equalities and Welsh Language matters must be considered when preparing Council publications.
- Ensure all external printing is placed through the council's design and print services utilising the Welsh Government / CCBC external print framework.
- Maintain the competitive skill base levels of our graphic designers in line with that of a dynamic and multi-disciplined area of the arts.
- Continue to provide a valuable area of expertise for students and aspiring designers looking to gain work experience in a busy and dynamic design studio.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Provide the lead on implementing and maintaining a digital presence for the CCBC Communications Unit so as to ensure we are the 'first point of contact' for all council communications needs.
2014-15	Work closely with IT services to set-up and implement communications project and strategy management software.
2014-15	Ensure all design studio computer hardware and software are comparable and competitive with external agencies.
2015-16	Introduce a job satisfaction monitoring survey to help improve and better the service provided.

## PRINT SERVICES

The corporate Print Unit supports all service areas throughout the authority providing quality printed material including corporate stationery, Committee documentation, electoral documents, council tax forms and internal carbonless forms such as purchase order books, cheque remittance books etc.

To enable clients to deliver a complete marketing campaign, the unit has the facilities to produce high quality colour A5 fliers, A4, A3 & A2 posters, Pop up banners and PVC external banners.

The team work in conjunction with the Design Studio in 'policing' the corporate identity and to ensure all printed material is compliant with CCBC's branding guidelines.

The unit provides high quality Direct Mail service to staff such as payslips and council tax bills and cheques, focusing on bespoke requirements.

For the complete print service, the unit has other various offline services such as, numbering, folding, padding, trimming, plastic and wire binding.

### Strategic Aims:

- To ensure value for money.
- Continually improve the service, and to be competitive with our external partners for cost and quality.
- To ensure that all external printing to be placed either through print or design services using the Welsh Government CCBC external print framework.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Introduction of web based ordering form. Introduction and promotion of Large format printer. Review current copier contract.
2014-15	Liaise with partner agencies and neighbouring authorities to discuss potential for providing print services. Evaluate postal cost expenditure within the Print Unit - Tender this service, benefits is financial savings.
2015-16	Work with procurement services to provide a robust tender for replacement of high volume black & white & colour copiers.



## CORPORATE PUBLICATIONS

The council produces a number of corporate publications to provide information to residents and other key stakeholders.

The main corporate publications include:

- **Newsline:** Tabloid newsletter produced 6 times p/a and distributed to all homes and businesses in the Caerphilly bounty borough.
- **Caerphilly Delivers:** Quarterly A5 publication aimed mainly at the internal audience , but with some external distribution.
- **Community Guide and Directory:** Annual publication which was also launched as an online database for the first time in 2013. Contains useful information about various groups and organisations across the community.

Whilst the authority recognises that digital communication is becoming increasingly pre-velant, we also need to bear in mind that there is still a requirement for printed material to be produced in order to target residents who do not have online access.

### Strategic Aims:

- Continue to develop key corporate publications as an effective means of disseminating information to stakeholders.
- Use publications to reflect the values and objectives of the organisation in a consistent and effective manner.
- Review costs associated with the production of corporate publications and identify savings opportunities wherever possible.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Review frequency on Newsline in line with agreed savings targets.
2014-15	Review paper quality used in corporate publications with a view to reduce print costs.
2014-15	Work with procurement services to renew printing contract for Newsline.
2015-16	Undertake consultation activity to measure opinion of key corporate publications.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The council's Internal Communications Strategy works towards keeping our workforce well informed and updated in a timely and consistent manner. This is being achieved by adopting a whole- authority approach to communication through the implementation of a number of internal communications mechanisms.

Effective internal two-way communications is fundamental to ensuring staff are fully informed and engaged. Regular and consistent cascading of information to the 9,000+ employees will ensure staff feel valued by the organisation.

With approximately 78% of the workforce living within the Caerphilly county borough, effective internal communication channels offer a unique opportunity to promote good practice taking place across the authority. Empowering employees with knowledge of key decisions and the authority's vision and strategic direction will have a positive impact on employee performance and in turn, on the reputation of the organisation.

### Strategic Aims:

- Develop effective mechanisms for disseminating consistent messages to staff across the whole organisation.
- Create a culture change within the organisations and reinforce that internal communications is every member of staff's responsibility.
- Encourage two-way flow of communication in an open and transparent way.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Manage Implementation of authority-wide team briefings starting at CMT level down to every employee across the organisation.
2014-15	Implement a mechanism for staff to submit ideas and questions that can be considered and responded to at a corporate level.
2015-16	Introduce Social Media activity with the aim of keeping staff fully informed on news and information released in the public domain.

## EVENT MANAGEMENT

Corporate events (eg Facility openings, launches, Ministerial visits etc) present a unique opportunity to showcase the authority to local residents and the wider audience. The Communications Team endeavour to streamline the planning and structure of events ensuring continuity and professional standards are maintained.

Offering a comprehensive advice and budget management service the team are best placed to establish appropriate timing to ensure maximum publicity to compliment the authority's wider working agenda. Political knowledge and an overview of the authority means the team is well placed to act as a liaison with Welsh Government and key partners, ensuring all events are well attended and officers and politicians are briefed in advance.

Working for services across the authority the team will assess each event and allocate resources accordingly and on occasions will act purely in an advisory capacity where appropriate to work collaboratively and add value.

### Strategic Aims:

- Provide a comprehensive corporate events advice and management service.
- Streamline the planning of all corporate events ensuring continuity across the organisation.
- Establish the team as the first point of contact when directorates are considering planning a corporate event.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Collate a schedule of proposed corporate events in advance to allow appropriate time for planning.
2014-15	Provide a budget management service for corporate events to allow funds to be allocated accordingly.
2015-16	To evaluate the level of support required for each event in relation to the teams resources.
2014-15	To ensure Officers and Cabinet Member are aware of the corporate event speech writing service offered by the team.

## CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Engagement means anything that we do that informs citizens about what we do or involves citizens in the council's decision making process.

### Strategic Aims:

When we talk about engaging "citizens" we make a commitment to engage with:

- People from every part of the county borough and from every community and of all ages, making a particular effort to encourage those currently not engaged/difficult to reach.
- Members of the public including those on our Viewpoint Panel, community, voluntary and special interest groups.
- Children and Young People including those on the Youth and Junior Forums.
- Users of specific council services.
- Our democratically elected representatives.
- Partner organisations.
- Local businesses and business forums.
- Employees of the council.
- Specific subject Forums.
- The media

Caerphilly County Borough Council has adopted the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales as a guiding document for all of our engagement activities and the outcomes of the Council's Citizen Engagement Strategy (2013) are derived from these National Principles.

Tools for engagement - Recognising that different levels of involvement are appropriate in different circumstances, the tools for engagement will depend on:

- the purpose of the engagement
- the stage in the project planning cycle at which engagement takes place
- those we are engaging with - recognising that different groups and individuals have different preferences

It is the responsibility of the Communications Unit to lead on the development and delivery of the council's Citizen Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. (2013)

Key areas of responsibility of the Communications Unit are to:

- Support directorates in undertaking engagement activities through providing advice, guidance and coordinating training for officers.
- Undertake large scale corporate consultation exercises such as the biennial Household Survey.

- To facilitate the coordination of Consultation and Engagement activities across the Authority
- Protocols are in place to ensure outcomes of engagement are fed into decision making process.
- Monitor and evaluate engagement activity in line with the national principles of public engagement.
- Ensure alignment of the Council's engagement activity with that of our Local Service Board partners

### Priority Activities:

Key tasks for delivery of the council's Citizen Engagement Strategy and Action Plan (2013) are highlighted below. For further detail, please refer to the Citizen Engagement Strategy. (See appendices)

Results of the 2013 Household Survey to be fed into the decision making process.
Develop a clear protocol for feeding back the impact of an engagement activity where appropriate. Communicate this with all staff.
Create a step by step guide / flowchart outlining where engagement is appropriate in the project planning process how to undertake appropriate engagement at these various stages.
Reinstate the "Caerphilly Asks Caerphilly Listens" database. Develop an implementation plan and put in place appropriate structures and training to support the system within each directorate and corporately.
Reinvigorate the Practitioners and Facilitator Network and develop a structured training programme across partner organisations.

# TWINNING

The Communications Team has responsibility for co-ordinating the civic twinning links between Ludwigsburg in Germany and Pisek in the Czech Republic.

First established more than 50 years ago, our twinning relationship is intended to foster friendship and understanding between European partners and to encourage trade and tourism links.

The Communications Team is tasked with forging and fostering these links so we can share experiences and create strong partnerships. The various twinning events and activities organised by all parties also provide opportunities to share our culture and profile Caerphilly county borough as a tourist destination within Europe.

### Strategic Aims:

- Continue to raise the profile of Twinning to secure the future of the longstanding European relationships.
- Empower the wider community to take ownership of creating twinning links and foster relations.
- Develop innovative ways to continue the partnerships with reduced budgets.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Develop the Twinning website to incorporate all activities and exchanges.
2014-15	Promote grants to community groups and organisations to encourage twinning partnerships.
2014-15	Draft an annual plan to outline activities for the coming year and tie in with the Improvement objectives.

# BRAND MANAGEMENT

The Communications Unit is responsible for managing all aspects of the council's corporate identity and branding.

It is essential that all council services present reliable, consistent and recognisable information to build on customer awareness and recognition of the authority and the services we provide.

It is extremely important that all of our visual and written communications follow the rules set out in the Corporate Identity Guidelines (see appendices), as poor branding distances our services from us and confuses customers.

The guide is an important reference tool for all council employees and external suppliers such as printers, publishers, copywriters or other people who are contracted to produce or reproduce promotional activity material for us.

The Corporate Identity Guidelines covers specific areas including:

- Publications, leaflets and posters
- Stationery
- Publicity planning / campaigns
- Website
- Advertising
- The use of our logo in partnership working
- Powerpoint presentations
- Signage
- Vehicle livery
- Uniforms

## Strategic Aims:

- To ensure that all parts of the organisation are aware of and adhere to the agreed Corporate Identity Guidelines.
- The council always presents a strong brand identity which is used in a clear and consistent manner.
- All communication channels and promotional opportunities have strong council branding to clearly identify the organisation to its stakeholders.

## CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT

A campaign can be defined as 'a series of communications activities with a common objective and theme, where each succeeding element adds to the effectiveness of those preceding, to influence and change the target audience's behaviour and/or perceptions'.

The Communications Unit manages all aspects of campaign management on behalf of the organisation, and utilises the graphic design and central advertising service to ensure value for money and maximum purchasing power.

In creating integrated communication campaigns, we aim to ensure that:

- Goals, objectives and a targeted approach are identified at the outset.
- Senior management backing has been received.
- Appropriate resources are in place, and that the campaign has an imperative to achieve real change.
- Value for money is at the heart of each integrated campaign, and that all alternative communication techniques relevant to the desired target audience have been explored.
- Have clearly defined evaluation measures built into the process.
- The desired outcomes from individual communication campaigns complement the organisations' key corporate objectives.

### Strategic Aims:

- To continue to provide a full campaign management service on behalf of the organisation.
- Establish the team as the first point of contact when considering undertaking an integrated communications campaign.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Introduce an initial campaign development template to be filled in by the client to determine how the campaign idea can demonstrate strategic fit with the organisations' objectives, value for money and that appropriate consideration has been given to key target audiences.
2015-16	Work with partners to consider a 'regional' or 'shared' approach to campaign work - an easily accessible platform for campaign materials which could be personalised according to local authority area to be considered.



## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Communications Unit, like other departments across the organisation, utilise Service Improvement Plans and the online monitoring tool Ffynnon to evaluate performance against a series of benchmarking standards.

It is these performance mechanisms which play a key role in measuring current performance and in setting aspirational targets and goals for improving the service and output provided by the Communications team across the council.

A focus on the importance of monitoring and evaluation should be at the heart of all work undertaken by the Communications Unit, and feeds in particularly with the following sections of this Communications Strategy:

- Media management
- Digital media
- Public engagement
- Internal communications
- Campaign management

It is important to establish our benchmarking position with various target audiences in order to identify key proposals which need to be implemented in order to ensure that key stakeholders – residents, customers, the workforce, members, media and partners – have a much clearer, shared understanding and appreciation of the councils operations, priorities, core objectives, values and challenges.

### Priority Activities:

2014-15	Review benchmarking/performance criteria in consultation with ICT Head of Service and Corporate Management Team to ensure that performance criteria for the Communications Unit is in line with wider corporate objectives.
2014-15	Undertake an annual workforce satisfaction survey on communications, the communication tools available internally, and how informed and engaged employees feel on issues which matter to them.

In 2011, Caerphilly County Borough Council adopted the 'National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales' as a guiding document for all its engagement activities. Since November 2012, these principles are supported by 'The Evaluation Toolkit - Evaluating your engagement practice against the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales', which outlines a four stage participatory process to evaluate engagement activities in relation to the National Principles.

This toolkit can be found in Appendix 2 of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Citizen Engagement Strategy 2013-2015.