

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY UPDATE NOVEMBER 2021

Prepared by Russell Dawes

Marketing and Communications Strategy

CONTENTS

1. Our vision
2. Purpose
3. Our principles
4. Statutory compliance
5. Crisis communication
6. Our brand
7. Current activity
8. Getting our priorities right
9. Where do we want to be?
10. How we will achieve our targets
11. Our performance
12. Glossary of terms or abbreviations
13. Supporting documents

Marketing and Communications Strategy

1. Our vision

‘To build trust with all of our customers through timely and effective communications’



The following Communications Strategy will support and celebrate the outcomes of the Council and underpin the Corporate Plan [2021/23], Maldon District Council’s top-level strategy document. The Corporate Plan sets out our vision to achieve a ‘Sustainable Council – Prosperous Future’.

The positive impacts that we want to make in relation to this vision is explained in more detail by our three strategic themes: Community, Place and Prosperity.

Communications and engagement will be outcome led and support channel shift - modernising our digital approach with partners and customers.

Communications should be two-way and are essential in giving information, engaging, consulting, gaining feedback, developing insight from people, residents, employees and visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. A good standard of communications is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Council’s work including councillors, staff and partners. This strategy sets a framework for our marketing and communications.

Communication is central to the delivery of all Council services and public engagement. We want to ensure that our priorities, objectives, values and ambitions are shared with our residents, workforce, partners, local businesses and stakeholders.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Marketing and Communications Strategy document is to:

- Outline the communication outcomes the Council has set out to achieve; in order to ensure that it listens, engages and promotes the work of the Council and partners have committed to delivering across the District.
- Communicate the customer offer, in terms of what we do and how we deliver it;
- Enable us to prioritise our resources effectively and plan-ahead

Our Marketing and Communications will be delivered through smart working in the following ways:

- Effective engagement to support strong and resilient communities;
- Working with communities, businesses and partners to promote the District;
- Working in partnership to generate coherent messages and maximise reach;
- Develop marketing campaigns which deliver positive results and measurable outputs;
- Ownership of marketing and communications workstreams for strategic projects;
- Delivering excellent internal communications and offering account management to support colleagues’ communications activities;
- Make best use of technology to gain audience insights, develop the best ideas, implement strategies and achieve maximum impact;
- Expand and encourage the use of a broad spectrum of communication tools to promote inclusion across our communities;
- Measure the customers’ experience and channel shift journey;
- Maintain the highest ethical standards of communications.

The vision and principles of the Marketing and Communications Strategy underpin the Council's overarching vision of: **'Sustainable Council – Prosperous Future'**

This strategy document will help deliver the Council's Corporate Plan by means of:

- Effective marketing and communications to promote the 20 outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan;
- Communicating the information our customers need to access our services;
- Communicating the impact, we have on our customers' lives;
- Influencing the behaviour and attitudes of our customers by developing and delivering clear messages;
- Marketing the Council's services and the District as a whole;
- Ensuring information is accessible and inclusive.

3. Our principles

Whilst each department will communicate to different audiences, a consistent tone across the Council is important to ensure that internal and external stakeholders have the right perception of the Council and that we communicate in one voice, as one organisation.

The following list of principles act as a useful guide:

- The work of the Council and the attributes of the District are promoted;
- Our communications help to drive and embed an agile and dynamic Council;
- Staff and Members value our expertise and support;
- We communicate, educate and celebrate;
- Communications should be factual, accurate, reflect the position of the Council and be approved by relevant Senior Managers;
- Communicate to the right audience, at the right time and be informative and useful;
- Always considers the appropriate channels for those with disabilities and accessibility needs;
- Provide opportunities for feedback and two-way conversations wherever appropriate;
- All Council projects have a communications workstream identified to receive communications support and resource (and at inception);
- Digital first approach is a priority, when social and electronic channels are the most effective method to use;
- Our activities are ethical and adhere to GDPR and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011.

4. Statutory Compliance

In relation to this Marketing and Communications Strategy, there are some statutory duties for which the team are responsible as part of any co-ordinated communications activity. It is the responsibility of the team to use a range of channels, in a timely manner, to ensure that our community are well informed about any local or national issues.

The following table sets out some of the key responsibilities:

Statutory Compliance
Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – we have a statutory duty as a category 1 responder to provide information to members of the public in times of an emergency and to promote any national, regional or local campaigns in order to warn and inform.
Elections communications – the Electoral Commission provides the information which we are obliged to use to ensure that the electorate is informed of any election.
Freedom of Information – the communications team are responsible for ensuring that any FOI's placed by the media are managed in the correct manner.
Transparency – Publication of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015
EDI Policy

5. Crisis Communications

The team will manage all of the Crisis Communications on behalf of the Council, guided by our statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to 'Warn and Inform'. This will be undertaken in partnership with the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF) and the Essex Communications Group.

We plan for and respond to any local or national crisis event, examples of this include (not an exhaustive list):

- Flooding
- Mourning protocols
- Health Emergency
- Health
- Transport
- Business continuity
- Terrorism

6. Our Brand

The Council has a highly visible brand which is depicted on livery and stationery as a Thames Sailing Barge and this is used across our social media channels.

The Council's Style Guidelines sets out where and when our brand should appear in internal and external communications.



In addition to the Council's Corporate brand we are an advocate of the 'Sense of Place' branding which is used to unify the District's identity which in turn helps to promote the visitor offer and local economy.



This complements the Council's own brand and is used in line with the Sense of Place guidelines.

7. Our Activity

The work of the team is dynamic, and we capture our activity across the team in our workplan which is a 'live' document and embraces what we do and can be seen [via this link](#)

The team deal with a constant flow of work and this comprises both proactive business as usual issues, in addition to reactive and specific project/campaign work.

We report on some specific Tourism measures as part of the Prosperity Strategy in line with the Corporate reporting schedule, but our activity supports and interlinks all of the Thematic and Commercial Strategy's

Specific Tourism Measures - Enhancing and Promoting the District's Visitor Economy

8. Enhancing And Promoting The District's Visitor Economy	8a	Business Benefit Through Tourism Activity - Evidence (Via Survey)		30%	Annual (updated Quarterly)
	8b	Digital engagement with media outlets (inc Social/Website)	Statistic data to be confirmed	TBC	Quarterly
	8c	Tourism Value to the District (Value £)		link visual to 8e?	Annual
	8d	Economic value of events £ (Estimate) (Individual data read per quarter)	Statistical Analysis to be run	TBC	Annual - Calendar year
	8e	Tourism Value to the District (Growth %)		3%	Annual

Social Media

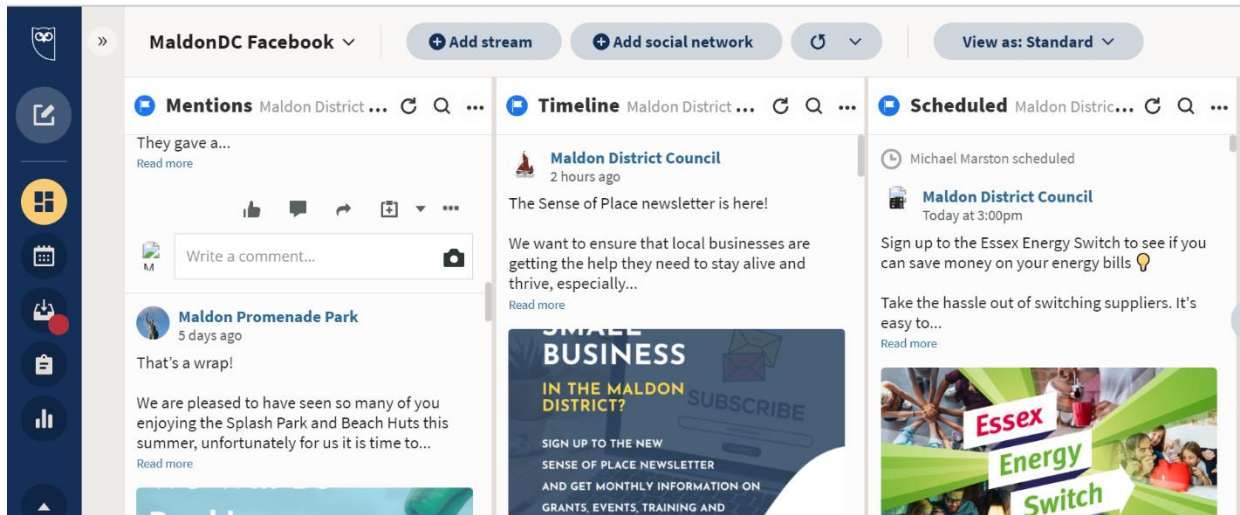
We actively use social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Linked-In) to communicate with our residents. This is a growing area of activity and we are expanding the use of these channels to help embed our digital first approach and engage with our residents. Our accounts are also increasingly being used by our Customer Team to engage with our residents on a variety of trending topics and local issues.

During 2020, our presence on social media has developed greatly, particularly our Promenade Park / Tourism page in line with new digital approach. A consequence of Covid-19 has meant that the uptake of digital services has become the norm with our main district Council website ranked as 47 out of 435 local authority sites. Our social media engagement has massively increased mainly due to our work on Covid-19 Comms.

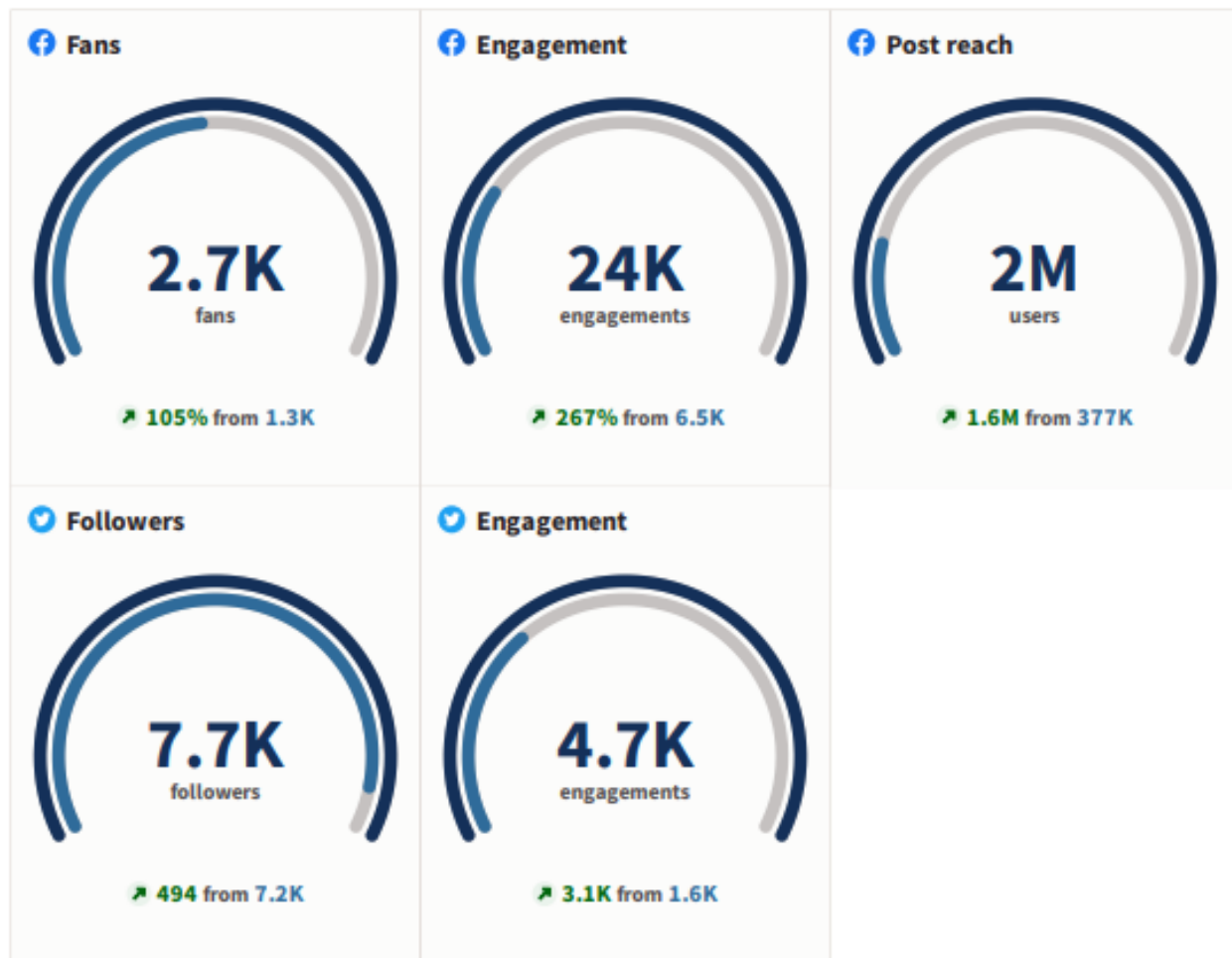
[Appendix 2](#) is an analysis of our social media channels

We manage and monitor our social media channels through our social media dashboard called Hootsuite and this is used to consolidate all of our social media channels in one place. It enable us to share messages out across all of our social channels in real time or schedule for later.

Example of the Hootsuite Dashboard:



Analytics data for period (02 March 2020 – 20 September 2021) compared to previous period (14 August 2018 – 01 March 2020):



Press Enquiries

Our press office has fostered an excellent working relationship with the local and national media and regularly communicate with them. We endeavour to respond to press enquiries within the timescale set by the media representative, but this is subject to our ability to follow due process to agree a response.

Annual Residents' and Business Survey

In October 2019, we undertook our annual first residents' and business survey to better understand how we can ensure that we are meeting the aspirations of our local community. Covid-19 did not stop our ability to delivery on the outcomes /feedback of this survey which were published on our website.

This survey has become a key process for understanding our community and enabling us to demonstrate that the Council is listening and acting, where possible, on the responses we receive.

Internal Engagement

We engage with our staff using a variety of channels which include Video logs, One Team bulletins, team meetings, face to face staff briefings (when appropriate), FreshService, Intranet, wellbeing events and staff surveys.



The 'One Team' brand has been instrumental in bringing staff together and has emanated in the weekly 'One Team' bulletin which is sent to all staff and Members. The clear message that we are all One Team has triggered a high level of engagement from our staff.

The use of video has been a key communication tool to connect and communicate with staff and this has proved to extremely useful and expanded across our other channels to communicate, educate and celebrate the work of our staff and Members.

Campaigns

As well as our own campaign activity and supporting awareness days, we participate in a wide range of national and local campaigns to support the work of our strategic partners. These include but are not limited to; Public health campaigns, Cabinet Office, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Department of Housing Communities and Local Government, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex Councils. These include campaigns such as waste, crime, flu, housing, census and many more and these are tracked via our social media monitoring platform, Hootsuite.

Annual Awareness Days Calendar

The team has developed a calendar of the awareness days and weeks that will be supported across the year, so that they can be properly planned for and activity coordinated. The days/weeks selected align with our corporate priorities or have a particularly high national profile.

Community Engagement Approach

During 2021, we will be developing a robust Community Engagement approach with the aim of supporting strong, active and inclusive communities, who feel informed and involved in decision-making.

This strategic approach will enable us to engage with a cross-section of the community on a number of our key prioritise including our Local Development Review and Our Home, Our Future Climate Action Strategy.

We hope our engagement will improve the perception of our services and importantly make them feel that their contribution has made a difference.

Screen Tourism - Filming / TV Opportunities

The popularity of the District as a venue for TV and Film Makers continues to grow, with the team supporting a number of productions including Series 2 of Liar, Location, Location, Location and more recently Sky/HBO with The Third Day. We have also assisted with a number of smaller TV productions.

Data from Creative England tells us that the value to the economy of the District from TV and Film making since 2020 is estimated as an approximate £2.5m and represents the money spent in the local area.

We will proactively work with our partner Creative England and production companies to maximise our opportunity to offer locations in the District for filming.

This will benefit our Visitor economy with visitors exploring the locations, so we have collated the productions we have assisted with on our [Visit Maldon District Website](#) to encourage these visitors.

Tourism Marketing

We support specific local and national digital tourism campaigns to raise the profile of the Maldon District as a desirable visitor destination working in partnership with our local tourism businesses and Visit Essex.

We will seek opportunities to collaborate on joint tourism marketing initiatives to share resources and increase reach to ultimately meet the outcomes of our Prosperity Strategy and emerging Tourism Marketing Plan.

We will ensure our tourism activities align with the three Council thematic strategies as well as the commercial approach, to ensure we maximise opportunities to income generate for the Council and to benefit the wider District economy.

We will develop our plans in an agile way to ensure we are able to respond to opportunities as they arise, such as funding or partnership activities which often occur at very short notice.

We will continue to promote the District as a destination of choice and to stand out from the crowd, ensuring our promotional work follows an inclusive in approach.

The visitor destination website (<https://www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk>) and social media tools will continue to be developed, including the use of extranet logins for businesses and organisations to manage their own content. Priority will be given during the latter part of 2021 to publicising the opportunities available to tourism partners.

Commercial use of assets

We will assist the Commercial Manager to promote and maximise the benefit of the assets which the Council owns or manages. We will support them with any communications and marketing plans and material to ensure activities can be targeted towards any specific consumer group who may wish to utilise Council assets, such as families .

8. Getting our priorities right

Using data and insights from a range of inputs and evidence, policies and legislation, the following SWOT analysis has been carried out to help us identify our Communications focussed strengths and weaknesses. The following information enables us to focus our time and resource in areas where we can both make a difference, either directly or by smart partnering, and where we can effectively measure performance.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professional and experienced team ➤ Coordinated, managed, and consistent approach to communications activities ➤ Respected internally and externally ➤ Comprehensive website presence ➤ Strict and consistent protocols in place ➤ Good relationship / contacts with the media ➤ Resilience provided through a multi-skilled team ➤ Access to external groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of clarity in publications could become a threat to our brand ➤ Unclear message, intent, and/or call to action ➤ Not taking full advantage of online platforms for engagement ➤ Lack of coordinated marketing ➤ Long sign off process can cause delays ➤ Lack of investment in training

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase our engagement ➤ Develop our digital tourism offer ➤ Enhance our social media ➤ Marketing and communications integrated as a corporate function ➤ Identify marketing niches and consider new ones ➤ Develop internal and external relationships ➤ Agile and collaborative working ➤ Improve our stakeholder database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time ➤ Resources ➤ Financial limitations ➤ Outside pressures ➤ Change in political direction ➤ Strategic communications planning impacted by reactive needs of customers and the Council ➤ Difficulty in managing expectations – ‘wanting it all’ with limited resources

9. Where do we want to be?

The Communications Team will indirectly support the delivery of all 20 of the Council’s outcomes. The role of the team may not be explicit in all outcomes but there will be involvement through communicating project milestones, assisting with engagement and where appropriate helping to celebrate successes. The function therefore has a pivotal role to play within all projects across the Council.

10. How we will achieve our targets

Strategic partnerships

Through smart partnering – collaborating and synergising with other councils and partners, providing better information and insights and improving ways of working in partnership to achieve ambitions in common - whether that is through delivering service benefits, securing better value for money, through joint procurement or by increasing the opportunity to secure extra funding, or adding capacity for instance.

The following strategic partnerships are identified in relation to our communications vision ‘*To build trust with all of our customers through timely and effective communication*’.

- Essex Communications Network
- Essex Resilience Forum
- Visit Essex
- Creative England
- Visit England & Visit Britain
- Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group – Marketing Group
- Cabinet Office
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Public Health England
- LGA
- LG Comms
- Bradwell B Communications Team

Strategic Communications projects

In line with the Council’s drive to maximise the opportunity to generate commercial income identified the potential to explore chargeable rates and services to TV/filming production companies that enhances our current offering. This will enable us to expand upon the charges for Officer time and advice, loss of income, use of land and Council facilities.

We have become an official Local Authority partner with Creative England and we work with other Councils across the County.

We plan to initiate a filming impact and benefits business survey after a known filming event has taken place in the District. Using the results of the survey, we aim to quantify the economic benefits from filming and production, by the end of the year.

11. Our Performance

The Marketing and Communications Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and reported to Committee. The Senior Specialist – Communications, Marketing and Engagement, will be responsible for this document, with the accountability for this strategy lies with the Strategy, Policy and Communications Manager.

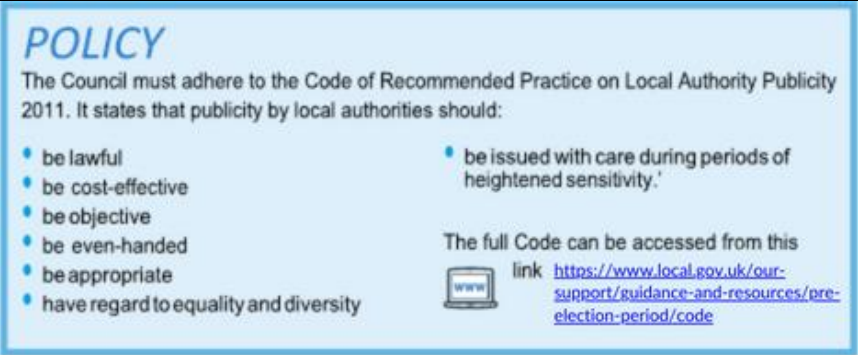
Our Tourism key performance indicators have been developed post-Covid and form part of our performance reporting and this is reported as part of our corporate reporting.

12. Glossary of terms or abbreviations

ECN	Essex Communications Network - A multi-agency communications network which co-ordinated communications activity across Essex.
LGA	Local Government Association - A politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of Councils (405 local authority members: 2018/19).
LG Comms	Local Government Communications – National body who co-ordinates communication and marketing campaigns across Local Government.
ERF	Essex Resilience Forum – a multi-agency network of key civil emergency stakeholders who have a statutory role to prepare and ‘warn and inform’ in an emergency.
Visit Essex	Visit Essex – Membership based organisations supporting Tourism and Marketing businesses and campaigns in Essex.
Visit England	Visit England – National body for promoting Tourism in England
Creative England	Creative England – National body responsible for co-ordinating

	film opportunities across England.
Mid-Essex CCG	Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Marketing Group – Health body for Mid Essex health and wellbeing campaigns.
Cabinet Office	Cabinet Office – Prime Ministers Office lead national policy and civil emergencies (COBRA)
DLUHC	The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities supports communities across the UK to thrive, making them great places to live and work.
PHE	Public Health England – National body responsible for public health and associated campaigns.
WRAP	Waste Reduction Partnership – co-ordinating body for waste and recycling reduction.

13. Supporting documents

Social Media Community Standards	External guidance on the Councils social media approach
Social Media Protocol	Guidance for staff on the use of social media
Press office process	Media enquires / news release process
Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity	 <p>POLICY</p> <p>The Council must adhere to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011. It states that publicity by local authorities should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be lawful • be cost-effective • be objective • be even-handed • be appropriate • have regard to equality and diversity • be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.' <p>The full Code can be accessed from this link https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/pre-election-period/code</p> <p>The code Local Government Association</p>
Elected Members Press and Media Protocol	Guidance for our elected Members
Corporate Style Guide	A guide to the use of our corporate style and branding

- This strategy is a working document and will continuously be updated to reflect new insight, decisions, opportunities and challenges. It underpins the work of the thematic strategies, Commercial strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan.