

COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN



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Communications, Marketing and Engagement Plan

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1. Our Vision

'To build trust with our audience through timely and effective communications'



'Where Quality of Life Matters'

maldon.gov.uk/corporateplan



The following Communications, Marketing and Engagement Plan will support and celebrate the outcomes of the Council and underpin the Corporate Plan 2023/2037. The Corporate Plan sets out our vision to *“To be a sustainable council, promoting growth and investment at every opportunity. To support our communities through excellent partnership working and to maintain and improve quality of life”*. Communications, marketing and engagement will be outcome led and will continue to support our channel shift, modernising our digital approach with partners and residents.

Communications should be two-way and are essential in giving information, engaging, consulting, gaining feedback and 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, staff, Councillors and partners. This plan sets a framework for our communications, marketing and engagement as communication is central to the delivery of all Council services and public.

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 Communications, Marketing and Engagement plan is to:

- Outline the communications channels the Council uses to ensure that it listens, engages, and promotes the work of the Council, our partners and priority activities in the district.
- Communicate the public offer, highlighting what we do and how we deliver it.
- Enable us to focus our resources effectively and plan-ahead.

Our communications, marketing and engagement will be delivered in line with our six priorities as outlined in our Corporate Plan:

- Supporting our communities
- Enhancing and connecting our place
- Helping the economy to thrive
- Smarter finances
- A greener future
- Provide good quality services

We will do this through:

- Effective engagement to support strong and resilient communities
- Working with communities, businesses, and partners to promote the Maldon district
- Working in partnership to generate coherent messages and maximise reach potential
- Developing marketing campaigns that deliver positive results and measurable outputs
- Taking ownership of marketing and communications workstreams for strategic projects
- Delivering excellent internal communications and offering account management to support colleagues' communications activities
- Making best use of technology to gain audience insights, develop the best ideas, implement strategies, and achieve maximum impact
- Measuring the end-user experience and channel shift journey
- Maintaining high ethical standards of communication in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and our agreed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

'Where Quality of Life Matters'

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

- Effective marketing and communications to promote the six priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- Communicating the information our residents need to access our services.
- Communicating the impact that our activities have on our public quality of life.
- Influencing the behaviour and attitudes of the public by developing and delivering clear messages.
- Marketing the Council's services and the Maldon district as a whole.

3. Our Principles

Whilst each department will communicate to different audiences, a consistent tone of voice 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 principles act as a useful framework:

- The work of the Council and the attributes of the Maldon district are promoted.
- Our communications help to drive and embed a transformed Council.
- Staff and Members value our expertise and support as marketing communications professionals.

- We communicate, inform, and celebrate.
- Communications are factual, accurate, reflect the position of the Council and are approved by relevant Senior Managers.
- Communicate to the right audience at the right time and be informative and useful.
- Always consider the appropriate channels to ensure we are fully accessible to all audiences.
- Provide opportunities for feedback and two-way conversations wherever possible.
- All Council projects have a communications workstream identified to receive communications support and resources (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.
- Deliver Communications in line with Civil Contingencies Act 2004

4. Statutory Compliance

In relation to this Communications, Marketing and Engagement Plan, there are some statutory duties that the team are responsible for as part of any coordinated communications activity.

The following table sets out some of the key statutory responsibilities:

Statutory Duties Compliance
<p>Civil Contingencies Act 2004</p> <p>Maldon District Council has a statutory duty as a category 1 responder to provide information to members of the public in times of an emergency and to promote national, regional, or local campaigns to warn and inform.</p> <p>We work closely with the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF), Essex Communications Group (ECG) and support countywide conference calls as appropriate.</p>
<p>Election communications</p> <p>The Electoral Commission provides the information which we are required to use to ensure that the electorate is informed of any election.</p>
<p>Freedom of Information</p> <p>The Communications, Marketing and Engagement team is responsible for ensuring that all FOI requests placed by the media are managed in the correct manner.</p>

5. Crisis Communications

The team manages all Crisis Communications on behalf of the Council, guided by our statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to 'Warn and Inform'.

It is the responsibility of the team to use a range of channels, in a timely manner, to ensure that our communities are well informed about any local or national issues.

This is carried out in partnership with the ERF and the ECG, together with national and local partners.

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

- Flooding and severe weather events
- National emergencies and alerts
- Health incidents
- Transport incidents
- Business continuity
- Mourning protocols

6. Our Brand



The Council has a highly visible brand which is depicted on livery and stationery as a Thames Sailing Barge.

On occasions we temporarily adapt our corporate brand on our social media accounts to support national and local campaigns such as Pride, Black History Month, and other significant national events.

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, the 'Sense of Place' brand is used to promote the Maldon district, specifically the tourism and visitor sector, and local businesses through the Visit Maldon District brand.



WWW.VISITMALDONDISTRICT.CO.UK

This compliments the Council's own brand and is used in line with the Sense of Place guidelines. We also create and support the use of logos which are used to depict our specific partnerships using the colours from the sense of place palette, as can be seen below:



7. Our Current Activity

Social media

Maldon District Council is well represented on social media, with accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) and these are actively used to communicate information and signpost services for residents, businesses, stakeholders, and partners.

Our social media channels provide a quick and effective method to enable our residents to get a quick answer for straightforward questions, while more complex enquiries are referred to our customers team or a specialist in the subject area.

Our digital and social media communications continue to grow, and we are expanding the use of these channels to help embed our digital first approach and engage with our residents.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's digital and social media marketing platforms have become a highly effective method for reaching our audiences with relevant and timely content.

Analysis of our social media platforms shows that over a period from April 2021 to September 2023, our audience totals over 23,000 people, growing from 12,000 people in March 2021.

In the period from April 2021 to September 2023, our social media channels resolved over 16,000 messages from our followers, ranging from service requests, providing feedback, social listening, and signposting to information as required.

Social media activity during this time also accounted for over 45,000 visits to Council-owned websites including www.maldon.gov.uk and www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk.

Additionally, analysis during this period indicates that our content reached 12 million people, with over 76,000 people engaging with our content.

Figure: Social media statistics for April 2021 to September 2023 period.

With the adoption of the Council's 'Our Home Our Future' climate action strategy, our social media is at the forefront of delivering climate action messaging and initiatives, as well as supporting the work of community climate action groups within the Maldon district.

The communications team actively encourages the sharing of work and news from colleagues across the Council so the public have a better understanding of what staff do on a day-to-day basis and can find out about the positive work being done to improve the Maldon district.

The Communications, Marketing and Engagement team are always looking at new ways to engage with audiences on social media and identifying any opportunities, such as Instagram.

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. Currently, we meet all requests made.

Surveys and Consultations

We support the communication of the annual residents' and business survey to understand how we can ensure that we are meeting the aspirations of our local community. The survey has been running since 2019, with the most recent survey taking place this autumn 2023.

As part of the feedback, we will be publishing regular features on our website as part of a 'You Said, We Did' feature which will demonstrate that the Council is listening and acting, where possible, on the responses we receive.

Internal Engagement

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, an engaged workforce is "healthier, happier, more fulfilled or more motivated". In addition, there is a relationship between engaged staff and "customer satisfaction, productivity, innovation, staff retention, efficiency and health and safety".

[\(Employee Engagement & Motivation | Factsheets | CIPD\)](#)

The Communications, Marketing and Engagement team produces a number of staff activities throughout the year that aim to keep MDC staff informed and engaged. We use our One Team brand to emphasise that when we work together, we achieve results.

Our internal communications activities include;

- weekly staff newsletter (One Team)
- weekly Members' bulletin
- live engagement sessions with CLT (CLT Connects)
- recorded videos
- staff surveys
- staff awards (Our Values awards)
- staff showcases
- events

Levels of staff engagement are high.

- Of the 232 staff contacts within the communications newsletter system, 207 are engaged, meaning that they are opening and viewing One Team.
- On average, 91 members of staff attend the CLT Connects engagement sessions live. They are also made available afterwards as recordings and as many as 44 staff have accessed the recording after the session (19 January 2023).
- 64% of staff completed the most recent staff survey (2022). 74% of staff completed the previous survey in 2021.
- 104 staff attended the Corporate Plan Priority Parties and had the opportunity to engage with the new Corporate Plan.



Awareness Campaigns

As well as our own campaign activity we support a number of awareness days and in addition 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 campaigns for UK Public Health, the Cabinet Office, Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board, Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Local Government, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex Councils. Campaigns such as waste and recycling, rural crime, flu, housing, elections, tourism promotion and many more.

One Maldon District

One Maldon District is a senior level partnership which ensures a joined-up approach to health, well-being, and community safety across the district. It also maximises opportunities to better align organisational resources, including pooling resources where appropriate, in order to reduce duplication and deliver improved outcomes at less cost for the community.

Climate Action

The **'Our Home, Our Future'** Strategy and associated action plan sets out how and when the Council will aim to tackle climate change and engage with all residents to help bring about positive change. The Strategy sets out five pledges which the team support in promoting their delivery.

Websites

The Council's corporate website (www.maldon.gov.uk) is our main corporate channel and is currently part of a website improvement process which is looking at improving the content and making it easier for our residents. In August 2023, a re-designed, clearer and more engaging homepage was deployed and improvements to the content are ongoing. Our Tourism website (www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk) is our main channel for promoting the district as a year round visitor destination. As well as events, accommodation and places to visit, it provides a wealth of information for visitors and residents alike.

Filming / TV Opportunities

The Maldon district regularly features on screen, whether it be on film or television programmes, and has a growing reputation for being one of the friendliest filming locations in England. This growing reputation is providing a substantial financial benefit to the district's economy from the repeated visits to tv/filming location hire.

The district is seen to be an ideal location for film and tv producers who are looking for a quiet location close to the main transport network with all of the supporting facilities that film/tv producers need. It has already featured in a number of films and our maritime heritage is often showcased in documentaries.

Movies filmed in the district include 'The Mercy' and 'The Woman in Black', and television programmes include 'Britain at Low Tide', 'Tales from the Coast with Robson Green', 'Liar', 'Great Expectations' and 'Britain Afloat'.

The most recent productions of 'The Third Day' for Channel 4 on Osea Island and Essex Serpent for Apple TV filmed in and around the district and other parts of Essex.

The Communications, Marketing and Engagement Team operate a Film service and regularly work with producers and location managers to liaise, suggest, signpost and facilitate all of their requirements.

Tourism Marketing

The Council's tourism marketing activities play a vital role in boosting the local visitor economy through creative and strategic campaigns, supported by a visually appealing web presence, and digital motivation across our social presence.

We recognise the importance of partnership and collaborative working to maximize the impact of campaigns.

We actively engage with a diverse range of local businesses and community groups through the dedicated Tourism Group (T23). This group serves as a platform for fostering strong relationships, sharing ideas, and coordinating efforts to promote the local visitor economy.

Bringing together stakeholders from various sectors, including accommodation providers, leisure, hospitality, attractions, event organisers, and community organisations, ensures a well-rounded and inclusive approach to marketing of the Maldon district.

Through this collaborative working, the tourism group collectively identifies key opportunities and challenges, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the local tourism landscape. This shared knowledge enables a more strategic approach with targeted campaigns to highlight the unique offerings and experiences available in the area.

By leveraging the expertise and resources of the Tourism Group members, we are hoping to further amplify promotional efforts and create a united front in attracting visitors. Recent successes include the first collaborate project – the Saltmarsh Coast Walking festival, a 10-day event across the district.

This included online content and targeted social media advertising, resulting in significant website traffic (15k views in September 2023) – and genuine users making use of the site, downloading walking guides 2,554 times during September.

Furthermore, this partnership and collaborative working extends beyond the realm of marketing. The Tourism Group is ambitious and focussed on facilitating joint initiatives, such as special events, festivals, and themed promotions, which enhance the overall visitor experience and enrich the local community. By working together, we will ensure that the destination is vibrant, welcoming, and well-positioned to support the local visitor economy.



Commercial 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 materials in order to target any specific segmented target market.

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.

<p>Strengths</p> <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 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <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
<p>Opportunities</p> <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 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time ➤ Resources ➤ Financial limitations ➤ Outside pressures ➤ Change in political direction ➤ Strategic communications planning impacted by reactive needs of residents and the Council

9. Where Do We Want to Be?

The Communications, Marketing and Engagement Team will directly support the delivery of all six of the Council’s priorities. The team act as an internal business partner and are responsible for delivering communication workstreams and project outcomes.

The team continues to lead on external communications, promoting the district, the Council’s services and the good work we do. The function therefore has a pivotal role to play within all projects.

Our Guiding Principles



We are committed to running an organisation that puts our residents first, delivers value for money, and works with our communities. We will underpin our work with our guiding principles to ensure we operate good standards and effective processes.

 <p>Finance & Income</p> <p>We will effectively use our financial resources and approach to procurement and risk management to deliver value for money.</p> <p>We will continue to seek funding, deliver commercial activities to generate income and maximise the potential of our assets to help achieve our priorities.</p>	 <p>Technology</p> <p>We will utilise modern and collaborative tools to efficiently work together, deliver accessible services and reduce our carbon footprint.</p>
 <p>Performance</p> <p>We will hold ourselves and our delivery partners to account for service performance, whilst delivering good project management.</p> <p>We will improve our understanding of how the delivery of our services effect our ability to have positive relationships with our local businesses.</p>	 <p>Governance</p> <p>We will deliver robust corporate and political governance framework for sound decision-making.</p>
 <p>Meaningful engagement</p> <p>We will engage with our residents, businesses, delivery partners and staff to deliver our priorities and inform the work we do.</p> <p>We will promote the good work we do.</p>	 <p>Our workforce</p> <p>We will provide a hybrid working environment offering work-life balance alongside opportunities to learn and develop to attract and retain talented staff.</p> <p>We will embed a positive and inclusive culture.</p>

10. How Will We Achieve This?

Through effective collaboration and partnering, we will continue to work with partners and agencies to shape and deliver campaigns, to promote services and engage with residents, businesses and colleagues locally, regionally and nationally.

Our partners and agencies include:

- Essex Communications Group
- Essex Resilience Forum
- Visit Essex
- Creative England
- Visit England
- Mid and South Essex, Integrated Care Board Marketing Group
- Cabinet Office
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- UK Health and Security Agency
- Local Government Association LG Comms
- Blue Light Services

- Active Essex
- Love Essex, Climate Action Commission
- Event partners (e.g. Marathon Events, Concert Promoters, Concessions, Market Operator)
- Contractors (e.g. Suez, Magnox, Places Leisure)
- North Essex Economic Board.

11. Our Performance

This plan is reported via the Corporate Plan golden thread. It is included in the annual Service Plan and progress is monitored through the Monthly Highlight Reporting.

This plan is a working document and will continuously be updated to reflect new insight, decisions, opportunities, and challenges. It underpins the work of Council's Corporate Plan and other associated strategies which may apply.

12. Glossary Of Terms Or Abbreviations

Cabinet Office	Cabinet Office – Prime Minister's Office lead national policy and civil emergencies (COBRA)
CLT	Corporate Leadership Team
Creative England	Creative England – National body responsible for co-ordinating film opportunities across England.
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities - Government body responsible for local government
ECG	Essex Communications Group - A multi-agency communications network which co-ordinated communications activity across Essex.
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.
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LG Comms	Local Government Communications – National body who co-ordinates communication and marketing campaigns across Local Government.
LGA	Local Government Association - A politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of Councils (405 local authority members: 2018/19).
Mid and South Essex ICB	Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board – Health body for Mid Essex health and wellbeing campaigns.
SWOT analysis	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis – a planning tool which seeks to identify the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats involved in a project or organisation
UKHSA	UK Health and Security Agency – National body responsible for public health and associated campaigns.
Visit England	Visit England – National body for promoting tourism in England
Visit Essex	Visit Essex – Membership based organisations supporting Tourism and Marketing businesses and campaigns in Essex.
WRAP	Waste Reduction Partnership – co-ordinating body for waste and recycling reduction.

13. Supporting Documents

Social Media Guidance	External guidance on the Council's 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 appropriate • have regard to equality and diversity • be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity <p>The full code can be accessed at https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/pre-election-period/code-recommended-practice</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