Marketing and Communications Strategic Framework 2022-23

Introduction

The aim of this framework is to share how we will tell the story of Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and the County.

It articulates how marketing and communications will support the delivery of the new **Council Plan**.

The challenges of the last two years shone a light on many things: the power of our communities, the benefits of our staff working as one Council and how working together with partners creates a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts ever could be. We want to build on those strengths to help tackle the challenges we face, including climate change, levelling up and educational attainment. Through a voice rooted in authenticity, we will celebrate all we do to make Warwickshire the best it can be. Today, tomorrow, together.

Key themes 2022-3

The refreshed Council Plan sets out the Council's priorities, with seven areas of focus and underpinned by being a great Council and partner.

Woven throughout are the overarching strategic ambitions to harness Community Power; the levelling up of the County and the action needing to be taken around climate change.

Levelling up

Within Warwickshire there are gaps we must address in terms of longstanding disparities which have been compounded by Covid-19. Tackling the inequalities that exist around health, education, skills, housing and connectivity; and making sure the economy is strong, inclusive and works for everyone. We need to address these differences to spread opportunity, embed aspiration and improve social mobility. We are taking a countywide 'Team Warwickshire' approach to levelling up that will complement the early thinking set out in the Council Plan. We will develop the narrative to shape content and engage with our partners and audiences, internal and external to articulate our ambition for Warwickshire.

Community Power

Community Power sits at the heart of our new Council Plan. In the plan we recognise that there are gaps we must address in terms of longstanding disparities. We need to tackle these differences to spread opportunity, help more people fulfil their potential in life and unleash the full potential of our County and all our communities. Our Community Powered Warwickshire approach is fundamental to tackling these disparities. We will work with partners to step forward and harness the power of communities to offer greater control over their lives and places, help improve outcomes and encourage innovation in the way we deliver services.

To bring this concept alive, we will seek out opportunities to engage with our partners and communities to generate content and promote the Warwickshire offer.

Warwickshire County Council

Internal narrative

"WCC has achieved great things in the last two years.

We have truly stepped forward - energetically facing the kinds of challenges that many of us never imagined we would see. We have broken down barriers, worked closer than ever before with our partners, and seen thousands of volunteers step forward.

We must keep that spirit alive and take it even further to meet the big challenges the County faces: getting people into work, reducing inequality, tackling climate change, keeping the County healthy and safe.

We are already doing many things in that spirit across the County. But now is the time to put that 'stepping forward' spirit right at the heart of all of our work. It means recognising that WCC can only meet those big challenges by working with communities, residents and partners in a profoundly open, creative and collaborative way."

County narrative

"Our County has a great tradition of stepping forward to meet big challenges. The Pandemic was no different. Thousands of people and organisations worked together to tackle Covid-19 and support those most at risk.

But there are still big challenges ahead: getting people back into work, tackling climate change, and levelling up to keep our communities strong, healthy, safe and green and increase opportunity for all. We all need to work together to take on those challenges.

That is why we are coming together, as residents, community groups, charities, businesses, public services, councils, sports clubs and many others - to step forward and make Warwickshire the best place it can be.

Climate change

The Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint to net zero by 2030 and to lead the County to do the same no later than 2050. We will deliver communications to support the Council's new Sustainable Futures Strategy, bringing together each of the key things - transport and highways, waste management and energy consumption - under one climate change narrative. By working in partnership with national and regional public sector partners, we will deliver projects, stories and campaigns to influence the behaviour of our stakeholders such as residents, businesses and community groups, to take action to improve biodiversity and reduce their carbon emissions.

Building on the success of the first local climate conference in 2022 and the Green Shoots programme, we will look to increase the participation of residents, businesses and community groups in projects to reduce carbon emissions. We will develop material which supports a shift in behaviour change across related services such as energy, active and sustainable travel, the natural environment and waste.

Child Friendly Warwickshire

It is our ambition to create a Child Friendly Warwickshire where children are safe, skilled, heard, healthy and happy. This means children and young people in Warwickshire will be supported to get the best outcomes in life, particularly those who are most vulnerable and at risk. Children and young people will have places to play and a healthy environment, they will attend good schools and be involved in decisions which affect them. More children will live safely at home with their families and when they can't, those in care will have high quality placements.

How we will do this is underpinned by the Children & Young People Strategy 2021-2030 which outlines our approach to bring the County together in a collective effort to ensure children have access to information and opportunities to fulfil their potential. Marketing and communications activity will take place through a range of channels to reach audiences in all communities to help create a County where young people are truly enabled to flourish in all aspects of their lives.

Education

The Education strategy sets out four key areas of focus to deliver best educational attainment:

- Early Years
- SEND and inclusion
- Family of schools
- Employability

Resource has been allocated to support communications activity across these areas including the promotion of early years take up, employability and skills initiatives and various strands of countywide activity. This includes the promotion of the Outdoor Education Strategy and increased schools sufficiency, along with the regular business of keeping our family of schools connected via Heads Up and social media channels. It takes account of the move towards increased academisation and the Government's green paper on SEND which sets out the national ambition for change and improvement. Our written statement of action (WSOA), produced following the recent inspection, sets out the framework and agenda for action and engagement, to be supported by communications activity.

SEND continues to be a national issue and the Council is committed to changing the way services are delivered here in Warwickshire, so that children and young people lead a fulfilling life and be part of their community.

In the Government's recent green paper there are proposed plans to overhaul the special educational needs and disabilities system for one that offers children and young people the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support, in the right place, and at the right time, so they can fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy and productive adult lives.

Our approach to improve opportunities for all children and young people with SEND in Warwickshire is already well underway with the delivery of the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme. Whilst we know that we have some real challenges to face, we have taken huge steps to improving the services that we provide.

Key to the success of the programme is to ensure that we work effectively with our partners, including the Integrated Care Board and Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice, to deliver communications in an open, honest and transparent way through the right channels and using the appropriate formats to reach our targeted audience.

Moving forward, we will continue to develop more creative ways of consulting, engaging and working in co-production with parent carers, schools, children and young people so that we can re-build trust and confidence. Ultimately we will improve the lives of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

Healthy ageing

Warwickshire has a growing older population. There are more people over the age of 65 than the national average (20.8% in Warwickshire and 18.4% for England) and those over 85 are expected to almost double from 16,561 in 2020 to 30,132 in 2040.

We want older people to enjoy the best quality of life possible and so our focus will be on healthy ageing.

Key areas of communications focus will be:

- Connecting with people, friends and family

- Helping people to ensure their home is easily accessible

- Physical and mental health and well-being

Cost of living

The steep rise in living costs has had a devastating impact on household budgets for so many and people are making some tough decisions about what to prioritise.

The council is helping people access information and support through **www. warwickshire.gov.uk/costofliving** that features links to services to help with money management and to meet the costs of food and fuel. We will raise community awareness of the Local Welfare Scheme which helps the county's most vulnerable residents who have no means of support by providing financial assistance and advice.

We will continue to publicise schemes and signpost support available from other public, community and voluntary services around the county, including debt and money management advice, family information and support, help to access food and household essentials and putting people in touch with local emotional health and wellbeing services.

We will also signpost to Government support packages and continue to distribute central funding such as the Household Support Fund at a local level to help those most in need. The Government's help for Households information is online at **www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ costoflivingsupport.**

Marketing and communication goals

For the council to achieve its goal of making Warwickshire the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations, our communications goals are:

1. To build on the reputation and brand awareness of Warwickshire County Council as a great Council and partner

2. To increase engagement with communities and use of data and insight so that services reflect need, barriers to access are overcome and best use is made of existing assets

3. To ensure council employees are well-informed and engaged and that the employee value proposition is embedded across recruitment and internal communications

4. To ensure members are kept informed about key issues and that we harness opportunities for community engagement

5. To make a strategic contribution to the achievement of the priorities, areas of focus and key themes articulated in the Council Plan.

Goal 1

To build on the reputation and brand awareness of Warwickshire County Council as a great Council and partner

In order to maximise sharing of key Council messages, we will proactively pursue a planned schedule of communications, complemented by taking tactical advantage of issues that arise. This will be achieved through news releases, campaigns and our schedule of Council owned publications. We will lead the County's communications response on major issues as appropriate.

How we will achieve this

• Develop, agree and embed narratives around Community Power, levelling up and devolution

• Maintain weekly news grid

• We will use our owned channels to share information and engage with different audiences

• Develop strategic campaigns which are delivered in partnership with our key stakeholders

• Agree schedule of award entries, focussing on those which offer an opportunity to highlight leadership and partnership

Goal 2

To increase engagement with communities and use of data and insight so that services reflect need, barriers to access are overcome and best use is made of existing assets

How we will achieve this

• Investigate options for greater listening to local communities

• Increase engagement on social media according to our ***Social Media Strategic Framework***

• Focus on community power: celebrate Community Power Warwickshire groundbreakers and early successes

• Develop communications which illustrate and illuminate levelling up ambition and activity

Goal 3

To ensure council employees are well-informed and engaged and that the employee value proposition is embedded across recruitment and internal communications

We know that the better engaged employees are the more likely they are to perform well, feel pride in their organisation and act as ambassadors of the Council, so we will:

- Promote wellbeing and an inclusive culture

- Provide visible, engaging and empathetic leadership

- Engage and listen

- Inform and communicate direction

- Create a high-performance culture

How we will achieve this

- Maintain annual plan of activity and engagement opportunities

- Build on the employee value proposition

- Maintain a spotlight on equality, diversity and inclusion

- Support the priority actions in Our People Strategy

- Develop and share Council Plan communications toolkit

- Roll out a campaign with a focus on returning to the work place, hybrid and agile working

Goal 4

To ensure members are kept informed about key issues and that we harness opportunities for community engagement though them

How we will achieve this

- Weekly updates using social media and assets mailing

- Specific member briefings on key issues such as Homes for Ukraine

- Promotion of democratic engagement and process

- Promote the roles of elected members, linking to Community Power Warwickshire groundbreakers and levelling up

- Explaining what Council meetings mean for residents

- Support members to raise awareness and galvanise activity around community power

Goal 5

Directorate plans have been developed and mapped against the Council's Integrated Delivery Plan, with impact linked to the performance framework.

Marketing and communication principles

Communications at WCC is a shared responsibility and every employee has a part to play in supporting and delivering effective communications. The following principles outline our collective approach to communications and are aligned with our values and behaviours framework.

We will:

- Speak and listen as one Council, telling our story with pride and supporting employees to tell great stories about the organisation and Warwickshire that unite us under a common brand.

- Use our County-wide perspective to engage and create targeted communications for localised audiences, communities and stakeholder groups, through working in collaboration with our local district, borough, town and parish councils, faith and community groups, Warwickshire Police, NHS and other partners.

- Develop creative and impactful campaigns that deliver value for money to enable the council to achieve its objectives and that are underpinned by data, audience insight and behavioural science.

- Move with purpose and energy, so that negative reputational impact is minimised and all opportunities are taken to increase reputational capital from positive news.

- Involve the communications team in projects and initiatives at the earliest stage to ensure strategic decisions are influenced by communications at the right time and resources are focused on our priorities.

Audiences

Our audiences sit at the heart of all we do. In developing campaigns and activity we will use data and insight to inform segmentation, channel selection and the most impactful mix to achieve our objectives.

The 'Countywide approach to levelling up in Warwickshire' document sets out 22 communities of place and 16 communities of interest which will be the focus of early activity.

We will develop channel maps to engage with those communities of interest; understanding who and where they are and how best to reach and engage with them.

Our channels

Owned media

The channels we create and control

- WCC website
- WCC YouTube channel
- WCC social media accounts
- Email marketing
- WCC intranet
- Working for Warwickshire
- Corporate broadcasts

Earned

Our customers, the media and the public share our content or speak about our brand

- Word of mouth
- Regional media coverage
- National media coverage
- Trade media coverage
- Broadcast media coverage
- Social media content shared by others.

Paid

A third-party channel

- Broadcast advertising
- Out of home advertising
- Print and digital advertising
- Paid search

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Monitoring, evaluation and review

We will share a monthly report on our campaigns and impact.

Our campaigns will be evaluated using the Government Communications Service evaluation grid, meaning that wherever possible, we will focus on inputs, outputs, outtakes and outcomes:

- **What we have done to enable the activity - the reach, planning, design, cost and effort.**
- **Insight from previous activities.**

- **The activity we've completed; partnerships secured, media coverage, target audience reach.**
- **Including message and channel selection as well as asset type.**

Inputs
Evidence-based insights about issues and stakeholders

Outputs
Communication and stakeholder engagement activities

Outcomes
Stakeholder behaviour and behaviour change

Outtakes
Stakeholder experience of our communication activities

- **Changes in behaviour, attitude or feelings.**
- **Whether we have achieved what we set out to do in terms of fulfilling a policy or organisational impact.**

- **The reception, perception and reaction of stakeholders and audiences.**
- **Campaign effeciency metrics to measure the effectiveness of messages and channels.**

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