Marketing and Communications Strategic Framework 2023-24

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 **Council Plan**.

The challenges we faced during COVID-19 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 2023-4

Coronation

The crowning of the King and Queen Consort in May provides an opportunity to bring people together and celebrate the communities in Warwickshire. From the Big Lunch to the Big Help Out, we will engage as many people as possible. The legacy of the Coronation will be the impact made through The Big Help Out to promote and encourage volunteering across the County.

Community Power and Levelling Up

We will develop a refreshed public facing narrative for these linked themes of Community Power and Levelling Up – one that resonates, inspires and clearly articulates how we will both listen to and work with communities. Working with partners through Team Warwickshire will continue to be key and we will formalise regular engagement.

We will work with our communities to develop local Levelling Up plans. This means finding new ways to collaborate and coproduce plans that genuinely reflect residents' priorities. To support this we will pilot specific engagement techniques and activities in one of the early place pilots.

Democracy

With elections on the horizon we will develop content and campaigns to raise understanding of how the council works, the role of councillors and encourage engagement in democratic processes; from committee meetings and decision making to mobilising people to vote.

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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 internal and external communications to support the Council's new Sustainable Futures Strategy, bringing together key themes such as transport, energy, the natural environment and waste management under one climate change narrative.

Working with local partners and using a variety of different channels to reach our target audiences, we will deliver projects, stories and campaigns to influence the behaviour of our stakeholders such as residents, schools, businesses and community groups and to encourage them to take action to improve biodiversity and reduce their carbon emissions.

Education

A refreshed education strategy is being developed with consultation taking place in June seeking views on the following principles:

- Enabling the best outcomes for all
- Aspiration and inclusivity
- Learner-centred holistic approach

- Early identification and help
- High quality services
- Effective partnership

Supporting the ongoing consultation and the work coming out of it will form part of the communications activity alongside focus on SEND, schools sufficiency, admissions and improving communications with schools. Specific campaigns will be developed around school attendance.

Economic Strategy

The Economic Strategy will focus on the post CWLEP landscape and the partnerships that will now drive the region's economy. Our narrative will reflect Warwickshire's strong economic position and reputation as a leader in emerging technologies and for attracting investment into the County.

We will showcase the impact of the WRIF's role in bringing sustainable investment into Warwickshire and supporting existing businesses to expand, along with promoting this and WPDG to the business community within and beyond the County. We will also highlight the importance of the different elements that contribute to economic success, including the partnerships with our universities, the apprenticeship programme, our transport infrastructure and the individuals who make up the Warwickshire workforce.

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 enabled to flourish in all aspects of their lives.

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Healthy Ageing

Warwickshire has a growing older population with more people over the age of 65 than the national average and those over 85 are expected to almost double over the next 20 years. We want older people to enjoy the best quality of life possible and so our focus will be on healthy ageing, including enabling people to support themselves and each other.

Marketing and communications activities will help people find information to maintain their independence and stay as mentally and physically healthy and well as they can for as long as possible. Raising awareness of opportunities to engage in meaningful ways with other people to combat loneliness and stay active will also be a key task along with making sure those who care for others are able to find the support they may need.

Cost of Living

The continuing rise in living costs is having a devastating impact on household budgets for so many and people are making 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**

Highways

Given the breadth, depth and complexity of issues impacting directly on the public, we will develop a focussed area of work which supports and builds on engagement with members so that they are well equipped with the information and knowledge to best meet need and direct activity. Key areas include delegated budgets and new grant funding.

Being a Great Council and Partner

The County Council is ambitious, both for the County it serves, and in terms of how the organisation operates. Through the Team Warwickshire approach we are strengthening our strategic partnership approach bringing partners together to address the issues facing the County. Increases in demand remain significant, and will require new ways of doing things to maintain value for money and continued financial resilience. We are enhancing our digital infrastructure and redesigning our customer services so that they are simple, fast and effective, using data to help us target resources where they will make the biggest impact and address growing inequalities. Through our systems change work we will take action now to help shape the future direction of the organisation and mitigate future risks. We will seek opportunities to show the Council is a great place to work, where our people are enabled to be their best and continue to build a supportive, inclusive and diverse organisation.

As the Council streamlines and sharpens delivery, we will ensure our internal communications relating to this are timely, accurate and open.

We will continue to look at national, regional and local opportunities arising from devolution deals.

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 our 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 the key themes identified at the start of this framework

- Maintain weekly news grid and use a calendar of national events to amplify our voice

- 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

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***

- Develop communications which illustrate and illuminate the power of communities, and the contribution they make to levelling up

- Support development of local levelling up plans

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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 organisation, 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

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, process and the roles of elected members

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

- Ensure members have appropriate information flow around key local issues

Goal 5

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

How we will achieve this

- Develop annual directorate plans which are 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 the council's 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
- Podcasts
- 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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