

Chorley Council Campaigns and Engagement strategy 2013

BACKGROUND

This strategy outlines how we will develop from where we are now to where we want to be. It reflects a change in focus of the Policy and Engagement team to be more campaign-led in order to achieve the objectives set out in the corporate strategy, rather than having an external focus of improving and protecting the council's image and reputation.

Although it is a change of emphasis, this strategy will play a central role in improving residents' satisfaction. If customers understand and are aware of the services that are available to them, know how to access them and are able to communicate openly with the council, they are more likely to appreciate that they receive value for money services in exchange for the council tax they pay.

We want to be sure customers know:

- Who we are, what we're doing and why
- How to contact us, get involved or suggest changes or improvements
- How public money is spent and what is available to them

This document sets out how implementing coordinated and effective campaigns and engagement can help us serve our residents better and make the council a clearly visible part of improving life in Chorley.

Key issues and challenges

The change of focus will redirect resources away from communications and onto the development of campaigns that support the council's priorities, and events that support community engagement. The focus of the service will change to be more project orientated; to deliver campaigns, events and other initiatives that are priorities for the council. This will mean that resources can be more flexible and respond to the needs of the organisation in making it more open and accessible, and encourage greater engagement with residents.

Media and external perception

There are strong relationships with the local media but this has been and will be a key area of change in the next few years. We have started to see a decrease in the influence of the local press with declining circulation figures and quality as media companies have been affected by the tough economic climate. The two main local newspapers – the Chorley Guardian and Chorley Citizen – are increasingly being put together with more influence outside of the borough and by 2015 we could see no journalists based in the borough. This, combined with the opportunities that social

media bring, is a key factor in how we engage with residents as we direct less resources at dealing with the media and focus on directly communicating with residents.

We have established a strong consistent corporate brand that is carried through all our activities to help increase visibility of the council. This helps to make sure customers can easily recognise the council and its services. With the ambitions of the current administration to create inward investment, it is important this strategy considers how we ensure people from across the region have a positive perception of Chorley and the borough as a whole.

The Making it Happen campaign launched in August 2012, to go along with the fresh approach from the new administration, which is all about getting things done and acting as a catalyst for others to make a difference in their neighbourhood.

Internal communications

An important aspect of the campaigns and engagement strategy will be to get the support of staff who are a key channel of communication as they are in contact with residents on a daily basis.

Delivering the internal communications plan and the development of the new intranet will be vital in maintaining staff satisfaction and ensuring everyone is kept informed about what's happening at the council.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS AND CAMPAIGNS

To take the strategy forward we have identified six key areas:

1) Inward investment

One of the key priorities of the council is a strong local economy so it's important we support this aim by having inward investment as one of the campaign areas. This will not just be about promoting Chorley in the borough, but to look at what opportunities are out there to grab the attention of businesses and take advantage of Chorley's excellent location in the heart of the North West with excellent transport links:

- Put Chorley on the map as a key place to do businesses in the North West during the economic recovery
- Develop an inward investment marketing package
- Identify ourselves as a key source of information so we can act as a catalyst to increase investment and get local businesses working together
- Help get more people into work by matching employers and jobseekers
- Supporting a programme of networking events

Measures: Increased business start-ups, increased investment and jobs from businesses relocating to Chorley, reduction in unemployment figures.

2) Town centre

A strong local economy needs a vibrant town centre and so this campaign will be one that aims to first of all get a better understanding of who is coming into the town centre, but more importantly, who isn't and whether there's anything we can do to get them to visit. It will also support a more co-ordinated approach to events so that there is a better experience for people visiting and it can then build a reputation for Chorley town centre as somewhere people from further afield would want to visit more often.

- Undertake research to gain a better understanding of who does and who doesn't visit the town centre and why
- Develop a marketing campaign specifically for the town centre
- Increase the take up of grant support packages and be proactive in identifying areas it can be used
- Co-ordinate a programme of town centre events

Measures: Increased footfall in the town centre, increase in amount of time spent in the town centre, increase in amount of grant funding spent, reduction in number of empty shops

3) Promoting the council's assets and tourism

As an ambitious council we need to make sure that we set an example by getting the most out of the assets we own. There are many places such as Astley Hall, Park and Coach House, the Lancastrian Suite, award-winning parks and community centres that are not achieving their full potential in terms of use and income generation. This campaign would need a review of what is already being done but also to ensure that the main corporate events have a purpose and tie in with other campaigns within this strategy so they are not just 'one offs' that get people into Chorley for a short period of time with no further benefit.

- Review how all of the council's main assets are promoted
- Put together a programme of activity throughout the year that will attract people from across the borough into the main centre
- Develop the main corporate events to give people a reason to come into Chorley more regularly
- Work with other tourist attractions in the borough to see what options are possible for joint promotion

Measures: Increased visitor numbers, increased hire of council facilities

4) Getting people involved in their community

Including residents in improving their local area is a key aim of the council as by working together we are able to achieve and do more in communities. We can only do this if people know how to get involved and what help we can offer them. This will tie in heavily with the council's neighbourhood working scheme and also support the Spice time banking programme.

- Develop a new civic pride campaign

- Promote neighbourhood working – what it means, how people can get involved and what is achieved
- Make it easier for people to come to the council for helping in setting up own improvements
- Raise the profile of elected members

Measures: Increased positive perception of Chorley, increase in number of community-organised improvements, increased volunteering

5) Cleaner Chorley

Having clean communities is important to residents as we get lots of calls about a wide variety of work we undertake from grass cutting to fly-tipping and dog fouling to litter. This area of focus would demonstrate what we do and educate residents on how they can help.

- Make people aware of the amount of work the council does to keep Chorley clean and safe
- Produce/develop relevant campaigns around high volume/key areas of work such as dog fouling, litter etc
- Tie in with civic pride and promote what support we will give to empower residents to keep their neighbourhoods clean
- Improve branding of cleaning equipment

Measures: Improvements in cleanliness of streets, reduction in calls/complaints about dog fouling, litter etc.

6) Open and accessible council

If we are to achieve all the above then we need to make sure we are open and honest with residents and that they are all aware of what we are doing regardless of where they live in the borough. The opportunities new technology has opened up mean that we now have far more direct ways of communicating with residents so we will look to build on this but also make sure we are accessible to those who don't have access to the internet.

- Develop, improve and introduce new methods of direct communication with residents
- Ensure service information is available in all parts of the borough
- Make it easier and publicise new channels of contact through the website
- Develop a smartphone app
- Increase participation at the main corporate events

Measures: Increased participation in consultations, reduce amount of contact via phone and in person, reduction in confusion over who provides services and whose responsibility it is to resolve issues,