

## **CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Welcome to our second marketing and communications plan, which sets out how we intend to use activity in this area to support improvements across the Council's work and to bolster understanding about services provided by other local organisations too.

Work in this area is becoming increasingly important in achieving our aims and objectives as an authority. This documents sets out how we intend to use marketing and communications channels to serve our residents better and make the Council a clearly visible part of improving life in Chorley.

We want to be sure our residents know who we are, what we're doing and why. People need to know how their money is spent, what is available to them and what we stand for as an organisation. Only then can we begin to fully involve everyone in our work.

The plans and actions contained in this document aim to make Chorley Borough Council as good at communicating with its residents, other organisations, businesses, staff and visitors as the biggest companies in the world and create debate within the area which enables us to listen and take action on the things that matter most.

We want to be an open, accessible and accountable authority which asks for ideas and opinion, listens and then acts. This approach is fundamental to the Council as we seek to improve.

**Councillor Peter Goldsworthy**  
**Leader of Chorley Borough Council**

**Donna Hall**  
**Chief Executive**

#### **VISION**

We want residents, partner organisations, businesses, staff and visitors to recognise the Council, its role and services as positive and worthwhile, while building our reputation nationally as a forward thinking modern authority. We're ultimately aiming for a comprehensive borough-wide marketing and communications strategy that

brings together everyone within the Local Strategic Partnership as one voice for Chorley.

## **WHERE ARE WE?**

Over the past few years we have really raised our game on marketing and communications, introducing recognised improvements across the board.

Our first pro-active step forward was to retain the services of a media consultant to provide press releases and introduce internal channels such as team briefing, a staff newsletter and occasional briefing meetings on key issues. We also invested in a web site/intranet system and an A-Z of Services documents.

This was a step in the right direction but we remained among a 15 per cent minority of councils without a dedicated full time resource and a Communications Officer was appointed in May 2003.

Our CPA inspection and Optima staff survey reports both highlighted the appointment as an important development that led to a number of improvements. We produced more press releases and received more controlled coverage in the media. We became more competent at dealing with media enquiries. We launched a civic newspaper and improved the staff newsletter by establishing a staff editorial board. Communications advice was considered as part of planning for projects, policies and strategies within units and initiatives throughout the Council. Major reviews of internal communications were carried out.

But even with some of the basics in place we remained a learning Council. It was clear we'd need to work quickly and efficiently to improve.

Our first Communications Strategy 'Setting New Standards' was approved in November 2004. At that time, statistics from the Local Government Association showed 76 per cent of local authorities had agreed communications as a corporate priority and 41 per cent had a communications strategy. A further 50 per cent were planning to increase resources and 69 per cent had a centralised communications team. Only four per cent did not have a central team.

Research by MORI was also considered when planning our improvements after the organisation consistently found a direct link between communications and resident satisfaction ratings.

This pointed to the idea that the more informed people were about something, the higher they would rate it. Further research carried out by the IDeA's Connecting With Communities project also found that where councils were poor at communications, people were less satisfied than might be expected, compared with their overall satisfaction with the area as a place to live. In many cases, good performance on service delivery wasn't matched by high satisfaction ratings either.

There was, therefore, a well proven need to tell people what we were doing before they would recognise and benefit from our services.

This need began to underpin the majority of our activity in this area.

The Communications Strategy 2004-07 included a clearly defined set of targets for action and we have worked steadily through them in the timescale.

One of the most important and comprehensive developments was to centralise our marketing and communications work, bringing resource and expertise into the centre. The benefit can most clearly be seen in the appointment of a further two full-time Communications Officers who support each directorate in this area of work to ensure higher standards and a more consistent approach across the authority. It has also provided almost £30,000 worth of efficiency savings in the first year.

Internal communications has also developed and was recently highlighted as an excellent support network for staff in our successful Investors in People assessment. The review of Team Brief, improvements in the staff newsletter, involvement in corporate initiatives such as the Chief Executive's Awards and reward and recognition celebrations generally have all contributed to staff feeling better informed.

In addition, 63.8% of people who responded said they were made aware of changes and understand why they are happening and 71.3% said they felt they were told enough information to do their job.

One project that has made a dramatic difference however is the overhaul of our intranet into theloop. This has boosted staff morale and created £70,000 worth of efficiency savings in the first year alone.

In the 2006 Staff Survey, the three main communications channels were rated as:

theloop	34.5% excellent or good with a further 38.3% satisfactory
News & Views	61.7% excellent or good with a further 29.4% satisfactory
Team Brief	47.6% excellent or good with a further 36.5% satisfactory

Externally, there are a number of successful developments to note. Our civic newspaper Chorley Borough News has increased both in pagination and frequency to six issues a year. In addition, media relations activity has swelled enormously – with an average of one press release issued every day and cuttings increasing every week.

We've added more targeted publications to support work in priority areas, including a lively Town Centre newsletter for traders, food news supplement for catering businesses in the borough and neighbourhood newsletters designed to engage local people in improving their own community.

Activity has been re-branded alongside a fresh corporate identity, which has given the authority a consistent and professional thread through all communications and marketing material, designed to ensure customers can easily recognise the Council and its services.

This has led to a number of campaigns – including the popular 'You said, We did' marketing thread which gives customers direct feedback on improvements raised.

## **WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?**

There are clear areas where we're doing well and clear areas where we would like to be doing better.

## **THINGS WE DO WELL:**

- ✓ We have prioritised communications and have three full time members of staff working on communications and marketing activity
- ✓ We have a thriving civic newspaper issued six times a year
- ✓ We have great community publications targeting specific groups of people with specific information
- ✓ We have engaging and relevant internal communications channels that make our staff feel informed and involved
- ✓ We have strong contacts and relationships with the local media
- ✓ We have a switched on team in Executive Cabinet and Strategy Group who see communications as a strategic issue

### **THINGS WE'D LIKE TO DO BETTER:**

- ✓ We'd like everyone to 'buy in' to corporate communications and marketing activity and ensure the Council is seen as one organisation with one voice
- ✓ We'd like everything we do to look professional and be easy to understand
- ✓ We'd like to know more about our audiences so we can break down messages and communicate in the way that suits them
- ✓ We'd like to position ourselves nationally to raise the profile of the Council and the borough as a whole
- ✓ We'd like to utilise marketing techniques to be more direct with our messages
- ✓ We'd like to have a website that better meets the needs of our customers and reflects the organisation as a forward thinking local authority

### **WHY?**

Because Communications and marketing activity supports progress in the key objectives of both the Community and Corporate Strategies.

### **PROSPERITY:**

We'll help put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub-region by:

- ✓ Making sure people know about the Council's business and economic development services
- ✓ Marketing Chorley as a good place to work, visit, shop and invest
- ✓ Promoting sites, premises and benefits to prospective investors

- ✓ Marketing the Town Centre, including the markets, to residents and visitors
- ✓ Supporting local businesses with information
- ✓ Managing the media locally, regionally and nationally to make sure key issues like parking are presented in a positive way
- ✓ Making sure our staff know this is a priority and why, as well as how their role fits in

## **PEOPLE:**

We'll help improve equality of life chances by:

- ✓ Promoting civic pride in Chorley as a good place to live
- ✓ Finding out about the different groups of people in Chorley and providing information specifically for them to meet their needs
- ✓ Raising awareness on issues such as health and lifestyle and provide information about how to tackle problems and where to get help
- ✓ Support work in this area with timely and relevant marketing and communications activity

We'll help get people involved in their communities by:

- ✓ Making sure they know how the Council works
- ✓ Providing information about how they can be involved in Scrutiny, standing for election or just having a say at a meeting or consultation
- ✓ Encouraging them to vote
- ✓ Supporting the area forums
- ✓ Working with the LSP to make sure people know what it is and what it's trying to do

We'll help improve access to public services by:

- ✓ Making sure people know what services we provide and how they can access them
- ✓ Using the corporate brand consistently so people recognise our services
- ✓ Finding out who our customers are and using it to shape information about our services
- ✓ Supporting the development of the Council's Contact Centre by marketing all channels in place
- ✓ Providing a website that encourages people to use it

## **PLACE:**

We'll be helping develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live by:

- ✓ Marketing the area
- ✓ Making sure people know about the Council's neighbourhood services and how good they are
- ✓ Encouraging people to take a pride in their home and neighbourhood
- ✓ Providing information about the success of the Council's work with the Police and other agencies in the Community Safety Partnership
- ✓ Using the corporate brand consistently so people recognise our services and jointly marketing and branding where appropriate

### **PERFORMANCE:**

We'll be helping to ensure the Council is a performing organisation by:

- ✓ Striving to deliver excellent, timely and relevant communications for all staff
- ✓ Developing a communications and marketing strategy
- ✓ Making sure staff know about the Corporate Strategy, what's in it and how they fit in
- ✓ Making sure customers are aware of our aims and successes
- ✓ Supporting our efficiency targets through raising awareness of the principles of Gershon and re-engineering internal systems
- ✓ Keeping people up to date on performance

### **PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

The strategy aims to plot a course from where we are now to where we want to be, capturing our aims and objectives and highlighting actions that will need to be carried out if we're to get there. We can then monitor progress against agreed timescales.

Overall we want to:

- ✓ Ensure that communications processes and procedures reflect the Council's core values and support the achievement of corporate aims and objectives
- ✓ Secure commitment to effective communications from members and officers at all levels in the organisation
- ✓ Provide a corporate focal point, which supports consistency in the authority's approach to communications and assists the co-ordination of communications activities

- ✓ Draw together, in one document, all the existing elements of Chorley's communications and marketing strategies
- ✓ Set out a route map for ensuring continuous improvement in communications
- ✓ Establish a regime for measuring, monitoring and reporting on communications performance
- ✓ Identify and promote the benefits of strategic communications

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

### **Key objective: 'We want everyone to feel satisfied with who we are and what we do'**

This objective underpins the work of the communications and marketing team across the board. Making sure we achieve it is paramount to the Council's success in achieving the Corporate Strategy and ensuring performance in satisfaction ratings and how well informed our residents feel. It's also key to ensuring people understand why they pay Council Tax and the range of services they have access to. Our residents need to realise how the total cost is made up and exactly what they're paying for.

The approach to succeeding in this objective will include a blend of activity across marketing and communications functions.

External communications:

We need to make sure we talk to people across the borough to tell them about our services, policies and strategic objectives. We'll do this through our established channels – Chorley Borough News, neighbourhood newsletters, Food News and Talk of the Town. Additional activity will include a suite of information leaflets covering services and how to access them and a newly created website. One area of focus in the future will be to break down our audiences and look at targeting them more specifically with key messages that are most relevant to them. We need to move away from the 'one size fits all' approach and deal with people in a way they can relate to. We want to listen then respond, in a two-way process similar to that established in the Community Forums.

Media relations:

We've healthy relationships with our local media and receive a great deal of support from them, but managing our messages in a pro-active way is a difficult balancing act. Disgruntled residents unhappy with any aspects of our service often turn to the press to help exert their will and there are parts of our work that are necessary but not always popular – such as the controversial ParkWise scheme. We'll need to work hard to make sure we achieve fair coverage on negative articles and maximise our most positive stories in whichever way we can. This will include offering 'exclusives' to key media on key stories, forging more joint working with the media and involving them more so they understand how the Council works. We'll also focus on generating more pro-active coverage with articles and campaigns.

In addition, the Council now needs to spread the word further than the borough boundaries. This will include focus on regional and national press, as well as trade titles read by key opinion formers, our peers and prospective members of staff through titles such as Business Review Magazine, Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal.

#### Corporate identity:

One of the key actions in the Communications Strategy 2004-07 was to refresh our corporate identity. This was carried out in 2006 and included a modernised version of the Council's logo.

This identity now needs to be clearly reflected in everything we do – publications, staff uniforms, branding on buildings, signage in community facilities and our fleet of vehicles. People need to be able to clearly recognise the Council and its services if they are to understand what we do.

#### Marketing:

This is a main area for development and one in which we can show great progress from where we are now. We need to use the range of marketing mechanisms to position the Council as a community leader which is hard working, offering meaningful, value for money services and striving for the best future for Chorley. We'll do this with advertising in the press and outdoor on buses, billboards and community sites, as well as utilising our own buildings, people and fleet to get our message across.

#### Actions:

#### Chorley Borough News:

1. Produce six issues per year with flexible pagination to accommodate 'pull outs' supporting corporate priorities and projects eg the Annual Report.
2. Revisit distribution to ensure maximum coverage of homes in the borough in the most effective, value for money way.
3. Reconsider the impact of advertising to create as much space in the publication as possible.
4. Encourage other agencies and local people, including schools, the LSP, Police and community groups to take space to provide a community focus.

#### A – Z of services

5. Produce an annual A – Z of services.

#### Neighbourhood newsletters:

6. Launch four neighbourhood newsletters to reflect the four new Area Forum boundary areas.
7. Issue two weeks prior to each meeting to encourage attendance.
8. Continue to include the 'You said, We did' feedback approach.
9. Revisit distribution implications.

#### Food news:

10. Produce two issues per year.
11. Focus on legislative information and environmental services for catering establishments.

#### Talk of the Town:

12. Produce four issues per year.
13. Establish and encourage dialogue with the traders and members of the Town Centre Forum to inform content.
14. Use the publication to maintain interest and enthusiasm for work within the Town Centre Strategy.
15. Develop content to encourage investment, take up of Council economic development services and improvements in the Town Centre.

#### Leaflets

16. Audit information leaflets currently available.
17. Analyse requests for information in the Council and develop list of leaflets to reduce them.
18. Draft, design and print up to 20 corporate leaflets focusing on service provision for customers.
19. Make them available in hard copy and online and circulate links for staff to promote.

#### Website:

20. Launch new website.
21. Engineer 'take up' campaign to encourage users.
22. Encourage community groups to host pages and areas.
23. Establish content management system lead by communications team.
24. Achieve top rating/Most Improved Council Website in Better connected: 2007.

#### Media relations:

25. Pro-actively source and issue one press release per directorate per week.
26. Handle all media enquiries within required deadline.
27. Provide an in-house resource for advice and support for all staff.
28. Look at ways of working with the media – investigate job swaps for staff.
29. Highlight quarterly key issues and put in place action plans.

#### Corporate identity:

30. Develop 'toolkit' for staff to use when producing documents to style.
31. Audit use around Council buildings, signage, uniforms and vehicles.
32. Ensure all new material is consistent.

#### Marketing:

33. Audit and investigate Council owned sites and opportunities for use in advertising – vehicles, buildings, community sites, lampposts, uniforms.
34. Develop campaign programme in line with objectives in the Corporate Strategy.
35. Oversee introduction of generic corporate 'merchandise'.
36. Develop an annual Visitors Guide with key information, attractions and maps.
37. Establish a programme of campaigns to educate, raise awareness and call residents to action in key areas of work such as health, leisure and neighbourhoods.

### **Key objective: We want to encourage people to get involved and play their part**

This a key area for the Council and another that our communications and marketing activity can support. We need to make sure people engage with everything we do by making sure they know they can have their say in our work and grasp the opportunity.

We can do this by better targeting our consultation so it reaches people in a way they can relate to.

We also need to encourage people to get involved in the democratic process or the Council will never fully reflect our communities and neighbourhoods and our work will always remain detached. We can do this by making sure people know how they can get involved, but also by making the benefits and importance of doing so clear.

Lastly, we need people to realise that their behaviour affects their own quality of life and take some responsibility for that. We need to educate residents and businesses about their part in the community and provide a 'call to action' to get them involved in improvements. The main focus of this work will be in our neighbourhoods and streetscene agenda, where people need to take some responsibility for issues such as litter, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour if we're to make the impact we're aiming for.

We'll do this by highlighting prosecutions and the reasons why, naming and shaming people who behave in an anti-social way, but also by devising educational marketing and communications campaigns to raise awareness and promote civic pride.

Actions:

Engagement:

1. Work with Policy and Performance Advisors to devise and draft a consultation strategy that takes into account all our customers and partners.
2. Involve people when deciding how we will consult and communicate with them through focus groups.
3. Ensure all communications and marketing activity is targeted and timely, bearing in mind key audiences and outcomes.
4. Treat each request for consultation, communications and marketing individually before deciding how to communicate and get people involved.
5. Create a programme of work which aims to inform people how the Council works, how decisions are made and how they can get involved.
6. Plan an election campaign that aims to get people to stand and vote.
7. Highlight councillor contacts as well as the work of councillors and the benefits for the community more to build relationships and understanding.
8. Promote key decisions and background information before and after they've been taken.
9. Champion community involvement success stories through media and external relations work.

10. Open the Council up to the community with events and open days in our buildings show casing our work and introducing key officers.

Community call to action:

11. Devise a civic pride campaign that aims to encourage people to think about their own environment.
12. Develop an awards scheme that raises awareness about community minded behaviour and rewards exemplary residents and businesses who contribute to improvements.
13. Use communications and marketing to highlight behaviour that affects neighbourhoods and perceptions of Chorley as a whole.
14. Raise awareness of enforcement work being carried out by the Council through media and external relations.

**Key Objective: Build the Council's reputation as community leader and provider of high quality value for money services**

It's essential that we tackle the nationally negative perception of government if we are to make any real inroads into community engagement and satisfaction ratings.

We must target the negative associations among our customers and use communications and marketing to position the Council as a positive and worthwhile part of the community, as well as a leader in modern local government on the national stage.

We can do this locally through key actions and activity that aim to challenge the traditional view of a local authority.

Our refreshed corporate identity and logo present a more modern view of the Council, which must now move forward to be reflected in everything we do.

We can also highlight some of the innovative work being carried out in areas such as efficiency, new technology and modern ways of working which put customer access at the heart of everything we do and smash traditional ideas of how a local authority works.

One area which will have massive impact on our reputation is our 'You said, We did' approach which clearly positions the Council as an organisation which is genuinely

interested and actively seeks our customers views, listens and then acts. This reflects both the kind of organisation we want to be and also the kind of organisation our customers want us to be. For this reason, the 'You said, We did' approach will be further developed through communications and marketing activity.

Regionally and nationally it's important we're seen among the best performing local authorities in England and Wales and that we receive the credit for our quality services and innovation. This is key if we're to achieve our aims in CPA and beyond.

We can do this by working closely with directors and Strategy Group to tease out specific information that sets our approach aside from others and making sure it's included in key publications such as LGC or MJ. We can also position ourselves through success in key industry awards.

**Actions:**

1. Source areas of innovative work and champion success through media and external relations.
2. Ensure information is presented through the 'You said, We did' approach.
3. Make sure everything we do is clearly branded in a professional and consistent way.
4. Focus on key actions within the LGA's Reputation Campaign.
5. Be honest in our communications activity and hold our hands up when we're wrong.
6. Identify key industry titles and aim to place information in each issue.
7. Identify key award schemes and enter strategic categories that position the Council nationally.

**Key objective: Make sure our staff feel valued, engaged and informed**

Internal communications has moved from a perceived issue within the Council to a major strength, with staff feedback generally very positive for all channels in place.

We need to continually improve in this area, however, if we're to achieve our corporate aims and objectives, but also key objectives within this strategy.

Staff have a huge part to play in influencing our customers and we need to ensure they feel happy and motivated, as well as proud to work here.

We can do this by keeping them informed, recognising good performance and rewarding people for their hard work and dedication.

We need to consider this work carefully to avoid a backlash over investment and expense during a time of modernisation and efficiency within the organisation

The channels in place are popular, such as the staff newsletter, theloop and team brief – but we must keep them fresh and engaging if we want them to stay relevant. It's also important that we brand them together as staff initiatives, easily recognisable as the Council doing something for staff.

One way to do this would be to re-brand all internal communications initiatives – including events, consultation and information provision – as the same, rather than the current mish-mash of approaches. This would ensure consistency and recognition.

This would enable us to target more specific groups of staff more closely without being perceived as introducing extra channels, work or expense.

Opportunities in this area include moving more information into electronic form, which opens up new possibilities around frequency and cost but poses questions about inclusivity of teams such as the workforce without access to PCs.

**Actions:**

1. Review all internal communications channels, initiatives and events with a view to re-branding under one umbrella initiative.
2. Disengage from News and Views and introduce a weekly e-zine to staff on PCs.
3. Consider ways of introducing information quicker and cheaper and in a more relevant way to workforce staff.
4. Establish a working group within the staff forum to develop internal channels and keep them fresh and engaging.
5. Further develop the Chief Executive Awards to create a focus for innovative and exemplary staff.
6. Look at current reward and recognition schemes with HR and consider merging with CE's awards.

### **Key objective: Make sure members are engaged and informed**

There are member communications channels and support in place – but they are a much smaller scale than our internal communications work for staff.

Feedback from members shows they perceive this area of support as poor. They receive copies of the staff newsletter and consider their own publication, Members Digest, to be a poor relation. Produced by Democratic Services, this document was specifically designed to share and has largely included background papers and information to support committee reports.

Unfortunately, attempts through the Member Development Steering Group to engage people in producing something more relevant in line with the staff newsletter have been resisted and there's been little interest in developing the members area on theloop.

But to move forward we need to address this. Members must be informed if they are to fully engage in the work of the Council and be supported in their own work in their constituencies.

We can do this through providing more information through a range of channels including email and theloop, but we need to ask them how they would prefer to receive it and ultimately, what they want to know too!

#### **Actions:**

1. Establish a member focus group on communications.
2. Survey all members about their perceptions and needs.
3. Look at other authorities communication with members.
4. Work closely with the Member Development Steering Group and HR to  
Develop a programme of activity that supports training initiatives already in place such as member learning hour.

### **Key objective: Provide support in a crisis**

Communications and marketing will have a role to play when things go wrong and we need to make sure we're ready to deal with it.

The communications manager is already engaged in emergency planning forums across the county and contact details included in our own business continuity documents and the wider LANMIC scheme. The role of communications in the event of an emergency is clearly documented in both.

We've also plans in place to create a stand alone website which can be switched on the event of an emergency, giving only specific information for customers, staff and partners about what's going on.

Actions:

1. Continue to engage with communications and emergency planning professionals regionally to consider and be clear about roles and responsibilities.
2. Retain link with ICT to ensure 'dark' website remains operational.
3. Keep contacts for key people up to date through LANMIC and business continuity plan.

**Key objective: We need to make sure everything we do is accessible to everyone**

We need to make all communications including documents, the civic newspaper and website, easy to understand and accessible to all. We also need to encourage everyone else in the council to do this – and this is where our centralisation project will bear further success.

There are lots of benchmarks, national schemes and initiatives which can help us achieve this, including Plain English and offering versions in large print, different languages and in formats suitable for people with disabilities.

Actions:

1. Offer alternative versions of everything we do.
2. Make sure our website is accessible.
3. Apply the principles of the Plain English campaign.

**IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY:**

Enhanced levels of a wide range of communication and marketing activity, skills and competencies are important to achieving our objectives.

Responsibility for delivering this strategy should be held jointly by the Chief Executive, Director of Policy and Performance, Executive Leader with portfolio for communications and Communications Manager.

The group will drive through the changes as set out in the action plan.