

Communications and Engagement Strategy



Communications and Engagement Strategy

Fareham Borough Council's Corporate Strategy sets out how it will work over the next six years to ensure that Fareham remains a prosperous, safe and attractive place to live and work.

Our Strategy comprises three distinct yet interlinking elements:

Our Vision for the Council sets out our overall goal for the Borough

We will provide high quality, customer-focused services that deliver value for money. Our work will help ensure Fareham remains a prosperous, attractive and safe place to be.

Our Values describe the Council's approach to service delivery

Everything we do is guided by a set of values which are shared by all councillors and employees.



Our priorities

Our Priorities show where we will focus our resources over the next six years, including a list of projects that enable our residents to keep track of our progress.

1. Provide Housing Choices
2. Respond to Climate Change and Protect the Environment
3. Strong, Safe and Healthy Communities
4. Promote Economic Development
5. Leisure Opportunities for Wellbeing and Fun
6. Responsive, Inclusive and Innovative Council

Our new communications and engagement strategy is one of seven key projects to be delivered under Priority Six: Responsive, Inclusive and Innovative Council.

Communications and Engagement Strategy



1. What is a Communication and Engagement Strategy?

This strategy sets out how our communications and engagement services will be delivered over the next six years.

For the purpose of this strategy, communications and engagement broadly refer to the following:

- **Communications:** The activities the Council undertakes in order to deliver the Council's message 'out' to its customers and stakeholders, including our staff.
- **Engagement:** The activities the Council undertakes in order to bring the views, experiences and opinion of the Council's customer's and stakeholders, including our staff, 'in' to the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, our formal consultation process.

2. Why is our Communication and Engagement Strategy important?

Successful communications and engagement are fundamental to everything the Council does. They enable us to understand our customers and deliver services to meet their needs, to inform and engage, and to build interest, trust and involvement.

The Communications and Engagement Strategy also plays a key role in promoting and supporting the Council's Corporate Strategy 2023–2029, enabling the Council to work with our staff, residents and local businesses to bring about positive change across the Borough.

3. What has changed since our last Communication and Engagement Strategy?

The shifting use of technology such as mobile phones and digital and social media channels has led to a seismic change across the communications landscape.

As of early 2024, 97.8% of the UK were internet users, with 82.8% accessing social media on a regular basis. The speed at which news is shared has increased significantly and social media can help quickly disseminate messages to thousands of people. However, it can also be utilised by some to spread misinformation.

Although most of our residents and businesses are now online, there is a core group of residents that prefer to engage with us using more traditional methods such as in person or by phone.

An important part of this strategy is to ensure that we continue to meet the changing needs of our different audiences.

4. Who do we communicate and engage with?

As a Council we have a number of key audiences:

- Residents.
- Fareham Housing Tenants.
- Specific groups of residents (for example those people living in a certain area, older people).
- Under-represented groups or those that do not normally participate.
- Our own staff.
- Members.
- Businesses.
- Community and voluntary sector organisations.
- Partner organisations eg other councils.
- The wider Local Government sector
- Local, regional and national decision-makers and influencers (for example MPs, government departments and the Local Government Association).
- Local, regional, national, trade and specialist media.



5. How do we communicate and engage with our various audiences?

The Council uses a wide range of channels and activities to communicate and engage with its various audiences:

Website: This is a key resource for customers to access and learn about our services as well as take part in consultations and online exhibitions.

Press release: An official statement from the Council to the public.

Social Media: Our audience on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) has continually grown. The innovative Let's Talk Fareham Facebook consultation group and accounts on LinkedIn and Instagram are enabling us to target new audiences. YouTube remains important for sharing videos and hosting live online events.

Print: Posters, such as those in our bus stops or our 43 noticeboards, remain a great way to promote initiatives and events, particularly to those in our audiences who are not online.

E-panel: Over 2,000 residents have signed up to receive regular updates from the Council about upcoming consultations and other news.

E-bulletins: Thousands of our residents and businesses stay up to date through regular email updates on topics such as consultations, information for businesses and gardening.

Engagement events: We hold regular public engagement events as well as ad hoc meetings and exhibitions linked to a local hot topic, eg large planning applications. Our Leisure Team also holds a range of popular events throughout the year.

One of our most important audiences is the Council's employees and we have a number of ways we communicate with them corporately:

Intranet: A range of useful information and updates are hosted on our intranet. Staff can also post updates and questions.

Our news: Monthly updates from our Chief Executive are shared every month.

Posters and signs: These are used to support campaigns such as encouraging people to reduce their energy use at work eg switching off their computers when they leave.

Surveys, workshops and focus groups: These help ensure that we understand the needs of our employees and plan for service improvements. They also allow us to use their skills and knowledge to inform consultations.

6. Listening to our customers

Our Communications and Customer Service teams work together closely to ensure consistent messaging and swift responses to any emerging issues. Our Senior Leadership Team is updated about communications and engagement activities via a 'Big Picture' report.

7. Our Vision for Communications and Engagement

Our communications and engagement services will provide clear, factual, and relevant information, be accessible to everyone within the Fareham community, and enable our staff and customers to remain at the heart of everything we do.



8. Communications and Engagement Values and Behaviours

The Values and Behaviours set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy are reflected in the day-to-day delivery of communications and engagement activities:

Integrity

We will explain to our customers what we are doing as a Council, and why, by signposting to relevant and supporting information.

We will promote our Borough and tell the 'Fareham story' through a series of agreed key messages to all audiences.

Better Outcomes

We will aim to improve our customers' understanding about the services the Council provides, how they can access them, and provide informed feedback using straightforward, jargon-free language.

Responsibility

We take responsibility for ensuring our communications and engagement are inclusive and accessible for all members of the community, including those that are sometimes under-represented.

Kindness

We will treat others with kindness and consideration and take the time to understand their needs.

Collaboration

We will engage with our key audiences to help ensure that our services are designed around their needs.

Innovation

We will constantly strive to find new ways to communicate, ensuring all customers have access to the Council's communications and engagement opportunities.

9. Aims and Priorities

Taking into account our Vision and Values, the Communications and Engagement Teams will focus on the following Aims and Priorities both for our internal audiences and for our customers.



Internal Audiences: Aims, Priorities and Actions

AIM 1.0

Ensure all staff are well informed about the work of the Council and how they and others contribute to it

Priority 1.1

Improve staff awareness of work across the Council

- Provide access to the intranet (SID) in a quiet space at the Depot for staff to access SID pages.
- Refresh our SID pages to make content easier to find, ensure press releases are shared on SID, and 'Our News' regularly highlights the Hidden Heros from across service areas.

Priority 1.2

Raise awareness of our corporate priorities, alongside our internal values and behaviours and our staff's role in delivering them

- Run service open day sessions to highlight their work to staff from other services.
- Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to host an annual update to staff focusing on recent achievements and priorities for the next 12 months.
- Regular SLT hosted 'lunch with...' on Teams.

- Work with report and policy writers to ensure the relevant Corporate Priority or Project is included in policy and strategy documents.
- Computer lock-screens to show values, vision, behaviours to demonstrate 'Golden Thread' approach.
- Press releases to include the relevant corporate priorities.
- Email footers to include the Council's Corporate Values.

AIM 2.0

Ensure we listen and respond to our staff

Priority 2.1

Better utilise the skills and experience of staff across the Council when making decisions

- Run internal workshops on 'hot' topics.
- Run more internal surveys and consultations on internal or external topics to encourage greater involvement from our staff.
- Thoroughly analyse the data collected from staff, and provide staff with better quality and more timely feedback from internal engagement.



External Audiences: Aims, Priorities and Actions

AIM 3.0

Engaging external audiences

Priority 3.1

Maximise the effectiveness of outgoing communications

- Overhaul the Council's website to improve navigation and accessibility.
- Ensure an annual calendar of planned engagement is kept refreshed.
- Develop focused e-newsletters and improve engagement with commercial tenants and customers.
- Cover common complaints in honest, transparent messaging campaigns to residents.
- Use links with social media groups to help share Council information as widely as possible.
- Refresh and rebrand the Council's e-panel to make it more appealing and encourage more sign-ups.

- Launch of the 'Let's Talk Fareham' Facebook Group for encouraging engagement and participation in surveys.
- Horizon-scan for new technologies and approaches to support improved communications and engagement.
- Exploration of other social media platforms, such as TikTok.
- Focus on engaging online content, particularly the use of video, to increase participation.
- Ensure regular auditing and assessing of outgoing communications to support co-ordinated, consistent messaging.
- Create a strategy for engaging with young people.
- Continue to embed and regularly review our Tenant Engagement Strategy.

Priority 3.2

Maximise the potential of social media for consultation and engagement

Social media is an important tool for consultation and engagement. We aim to ensure Members, Officers and the Council as a whole get the most out of the platforms available by:

- Developing the Council's corporate social media strategy to identify suitable platforms for engagement.
- A social media policy will be produced specifically for Councillors, and a guide to social media content creation will be developed for Council staff using LinkedIn.
- Staff will be encouraged to use LinkedIn to promote the Council amongst peers as a good place to work.

Priority 3.3

Ensure those offline remain well-informed and can have their say

Not all Fareham residents obtain their information online, and those who live their lives partly or wholly off-line need equally consistent opportunities to engage. With that in mind, there will be:

- A review of all noticeboards in the Borough to reflect boundaries.
- A fresh approach to in-person engagement, demonstrated via a move from the traditional Customer Action Team (CAT) meetings to more proactive methods of engaging, eg attending local events to provide opportunities for one-to-one conversations with residents.
- Development of a team of volunteer champions or gatekeepers to better involve communities, with a focus on building relationships with partners.



AIM 4.0

Build trust with more residents

Priority 4.1

Improve transparency in our consultations

- Improve the consultation webpages on the Council's website, to include making it clear what can and can't be influenced in each consultation.
- Ensure timeliness and quality of feedback for each consultation.
- Ensure tenant groups have the ability to influence and scrutinise us in our role as social landlord.

AIM 5.0

Good value for money services

Priority 5.1

Explore ways to cover some of our service costs

- Pursue sponsorship of the wildflower areas in the Borough, in particular the wildflower areas on roundabouts. Assess the feasibility of using digital advertising at Council-controlled sites.
- Promote and charge for film locations within the Borough.



Monitoring the Communications and Engagement Strategy

The Chief Executive's Senior Leadership Team will be briefed every six months on the progress of the Strategy as part of the regular 'Big Picture' update.