

Communication & Reputation



Content

- Introduction
- What is communication?
- The corporate communications team
- Elected members
- The good communicator
- Dealing with the media
- Social media
- Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
- Any questions?



What is communication?

There are three things that we can say immediately about communication:

- It is an essential human activity.
- It is a **two-way** process and involves some form of 'social dealing', 'access' or 'exchange of thoughts, messages or information'.
- It can be straightforward, but is all too often less than effective

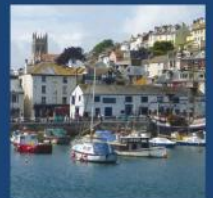


What is communication?

Why is good communication important?

Good corporate communication does more than just relay facts and figures.

- It can help people understand what the council is about, what it has achieved, the plans it has and the role that elected members can play in their lives.
- It can influence people to get involved, voice their views, contribute to the community and help shape decisions.



What is communication?

Why is good communication important?

It shows that councils...

- give people the power to shape their communities
- make a difference to people's lives
- seek a fair deal for taxpayers
- devise solutions to the problems of modern life
- provide ever-more value for money



The Corporate Communications Team

here to help you

The corporate service

- Takes the lead on internal and external communications for 700 council services.
- Devises marketing campaigns.
- Internal communications - including quarterly staff magazine the INFO and the Daily News.
- Handles media enquiries and press releases.
- Advises on the content and design of a wide range of corporate literature and publications.
- Works closely with the web team in relation to web content and design as well as corporate social media content.
- Works with partner communications teams on joint initiatives.



Elected Members

The role of elected members is vital

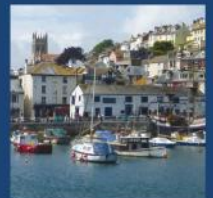
- You can ensure that communities have a positive and accurate view of what the council is all about.
- Ward members are the public face of the council in each local area. You can help to create a positive perception that Torbay Council listens to and acts on behalf of local people.
- On a personal level, effective communication can also help in all aspects of your community leadership role. The higher your profile in the community, the better your overall influence is likely to be.



Elected Members

The risks of poor councillor communication

- A failure to meet the needs of residents.
- The potential waste of council resources.
- An erosion of trust between the member and residents.
- Damage to your personal reputation.
- Potential damage to the wider reputation of the council, which could have serious operational and financial consequences.

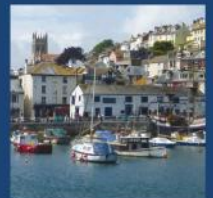


Elected Members

Who are you communicating with?

In carrying out the work of an elected member you will communicate with lots of people. That's principally because **local government is a people business**:

- Voters.
- Your customers.
- Your colleagues.
- Members.
- Officers.
- Partnership bodies.

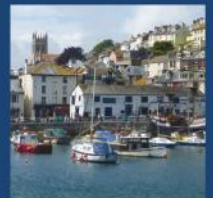


Group Exercise

Worksheet 1 - Who are you communicating with? (15 mins)

Working in groups think about all aspects of your role as a ward member.

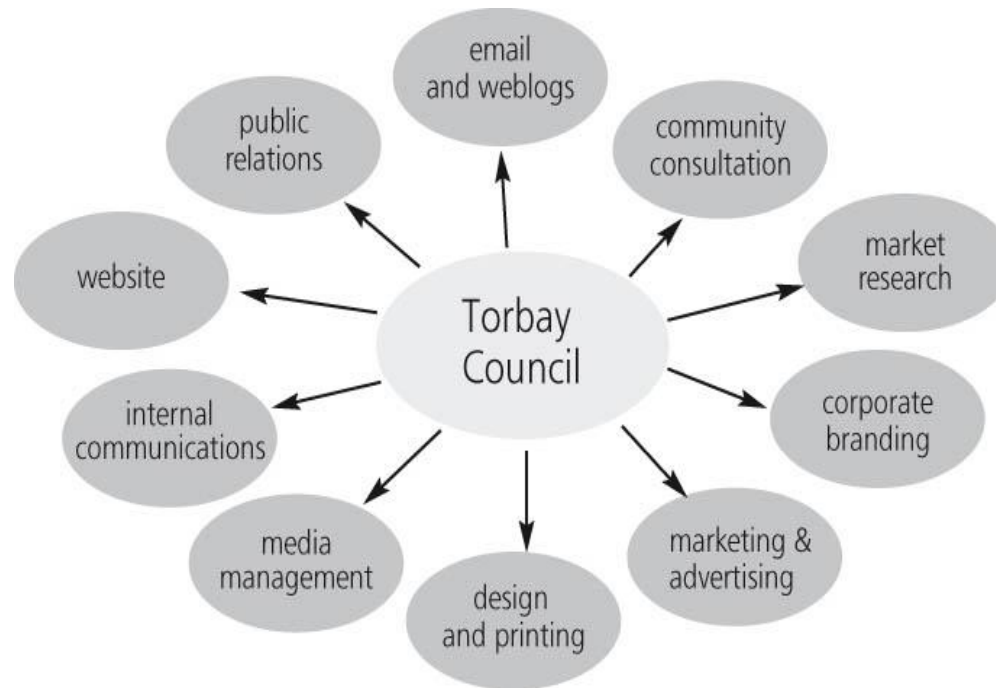
- What individuals and groups in the community will you have regular communications with?
- Is this communication on a regular or ad hoc basis?
- To what extent does this communication impact on your personal reputation and the way that people perceive you and Torbay Council?
- To what extent do you tailor your communication approach to suit the people you are communicating with?
- What different methods could you use e.g. newsletter, blog, surgery



The Good Communicator

How we communicate

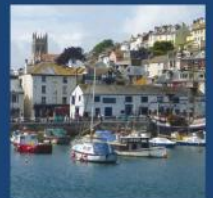
Torbay Council uses different methods of communication based on target audiences – both internal and external



The Good Communicator

Positive indicators:

- Communicates regularly with community
- Listens sensitively, checks for understanding
- Builds relationships with local media
- Speaks clearly and confidently in public.
- Avoids jargon or 'council-speak'
- Provides regular feedback, keeps people informed
- Uses appropriate language to communicate key points verbally and in writing.
- Take time to understand the views and concerns of fellow councillors and officers.



The Good Communicator

Negative indicators:

- Interrupts, appears not to listen and fails to listen to others' views.
- Uses inappropriate or insensitive language, e.g. shouting, being rude.
- Is slow to respond when approached by others, e.g. public colleagues, officers or media.
- Uses information dishonestly to discredit others.
- Fails to participate in meetings.
- Presents subjective and confused arguments.
- Operates in a political vacuum – the public see all members and officers as the council.
- Blames officers for problems facing the council.



Group Exercise

Worksheet 2 – Using communication channels (15 mins)

- The council has started a high profile campaign to tackle ‘anti- social behaviour’ in the area to a) encourage local people to report incidents of behaviour they find unacceptable and b) to get involved in schemes to reduce the causes and impact of this.
- As a ward councillor, you have decided to champion this campaign in your own ward to show what can be done and to encourage greater efforts by everyone in the local community.
- Working in groups think about what you want to achieve, who your audience is, your key message and what methods you will use to communicate this.



Dealing with the media

Be prepared - avoid the gaffe!

- **BP CEO - Tony Hayward.** When an oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2014, 11 men were killed. Five million barrels of oil gushed from the sea floor. He said to the media “**I’d like my life back**”. He was relieved of his duties and it caused huge reputational damage to BP.
- **Clive Adamson – Senior Executive, Financial Conduct Authority.** £6bn was wiped off the value of insurance companies’ shares after he disclosed to the Daily Telegraph that the FCA was planning to investigate 30million insurance policies sold between the 1970s and 2000 and was considering scrapping policy exit fees. The FCA denied the wide-ranging and historical nature of the review and Clive Adamson stepped down from his post.
- **Councillor Rozanne Duncan.** Expelled by UKIP for her comments about negroes in a BBC documentary. Caused further damage to her reputation by saying she didn’t regret it and didn’t believe her comments were racist or derogatory.



Dealing with the media

- Councils are major players when it comes to annual turnover and number of jobs provided
- Councils are increasingly selling their services and working with other organisations
- Our media profile should reflect this in the same way as a private company

A good reputation is vital



Dealing with the media

What is the journalist looking for?

- The story - something different, something new
- Controversy
- Beyond the 'so what' factor
- Good quotes - sound bites
- Facts, facts, facts.



Dealing with the media

How to handle a media enquiry

- Our protocol is that all media enquiries relating to Torbay Council should go through the Communications Team so that we can help and assist
- Usually the Mayor or Executive Leads are the representative spokespeople in council press releases and follow up interviews – no officers.
- The media are aware of this



Dealing with the media

If you are contacted directly

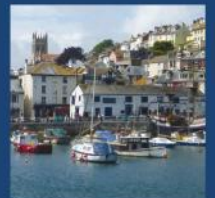
- Don't respond to press calls out of the blue- ask for the background and the deadline and tell them you will phone them back shortly
- Contact relevant Service Head and Communications Team who will work with you on a comment or interview
- Construct several bullet points or 'key messages'
- Be positive from first to last, avoid jargon or inflammatory words.



Group Exercise

Worksheet 3 - Some scenarios to ponder (15 mins)

- Anti-social behaviour in a park has resulted in a child being hurt, due to council owned playground apparatus collapsing. The park has been closed. What do you do?
- You receive a call out of the blue from a journalist saying that a major regeneration scheme has been pulled and they want a comment. You are not the lead member. What do you do?



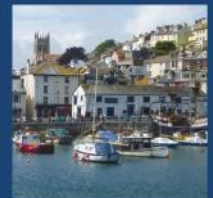
Social media

What is it?

- What is **social media**?
- Oxford dictionary **definition** is:
 - **Websites** and **applications** that enable **users** to create and share content or to participate in **social networking**
- Who uses social media?
- What are the best social media platforms for you?



- Social media is the responsibility of the councils web team



Social media

Myth busting & how it can help you

- Busting myths
 - It's a passing fad!
 - It's the answer to all of our communications issues
 - All of our residents will automatically follow us
 - What about if we don't want to share information?
 - What is digital inclusion?
- How can social media help you as a councillor?
 - Set up blogs.
 - Mobilise support for campaigns.
 - Test public opinion.
 - Help raise awareness of the decision making process.
 - Casework.



Social media

Ready to start getting social?

- Want to set up a social media account:
 - Read the councils policy so you are aware of what you can or cannot do.
 - Think about why you want to set one up and have a clear idea of what you want to achieve.
 - How will you access it?
- When ready to go:
 - Start up conversations, share what's going on, ask questions.
 - Try to respond as quickly as possible to questions.
 - Show your personality but always be responsible and respectful.
 - Think before you post - would you say it to someone's face, if not don't post! Your account is a reflection of you and the council, think about reputation of both.



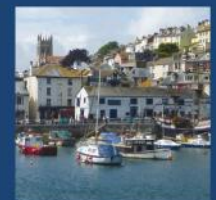
When Social Media goes wrong!

- **Labour candidate sacked over 'offensive' tweets:**

Stuart MacLennan, who was standing in Moray in Scotland, used his Twitter account to moan about having to go "up north" to his constituency, branded elderly people "coffin dodgers", called local people "chavs" and insulted rival MPs, including Nick Clegg and Dianne Abbot. Although most of the comments were made before he was selected to stand for Parliament, the resulting uproar is a timely reminder.

- **Tesco caught horsing around**

The horsemeat scandal was one of the biggest stories to hit the UK this year, and grocery giant Tesco was one of the most prominent villains/victims. Food investigators found that horsemeat accounted for almost a third of its Everyday Value burgers, though to its credit Tesco did immediately take action to remove the products from its shelves. Unfortunately its customer care team wasn't quite as sharp, and had to issue a quick apology after failing to stop this pre-scheduled tweet from going out...



Social Media

- Any questions?
- Does anyone have any examples to share of how they have used social media either as a councillor, in their campaigns or on a professional basis.

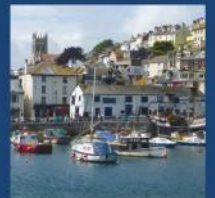


Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

The Government's Publicity Code provides guidance on the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity.

Principles – publicity by local authorities should:

- be lawful
- be cost effective
- be objective
- be even-handed
- be appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity



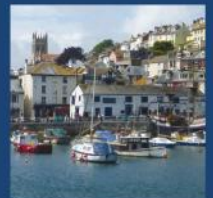
Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

- **Lawful** - comply with the Advertising Standards Authority's Advertising Codes.
- **Cost effective** - value for money.
- **Objective** - politically impartial.
- **Even-handed** - can address matters of political controversy in a fair manner, but the publicity should not affect support for a single councillor or group.



Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

- **Appropriate** - refrain from retaining the services of lobbyists. Frequency of council newsletters no more than quarterly.
- **Equality and diversity** - can use publicity to positively influence public behaviour and attitudes in relation to issues such as safety and health.
- **Care during periods of heightened sensitivity** - e.g. Elections and referendums



Thank you and any questions?

Please contact the Communications Team if you have any further requirements

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