

# One Voice **Draft**

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Communications Strategy

2016 - 2019



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

internal                      simple  
integrated                  listen  
honest                      concise                  open  
clear                      **key priorities**  
timely                      cohesive                  accessible  
consistent                  engage                  **stakeholders**  
transparent                  external  
standards  
relevant

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<b>The strategy defines:</b>
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- The aims of the Council's communications activities
- The Council's stakeholders
- The methods by which the Council communicates
- The information that the Council exchanges with its stakeholders
- Who within the Council is responsible for communicating

## **1.0. One Voice - Councillor James Palmer, Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council**

Effective communication is at the heart of everything we do and is essential to continue to make East Cambridgeshire an even better place to live, work, invest and visit.

Through successful communication, we are able to deliver the services that are important to our residents, achieve the **six key priorities** from the **four year Corporate Plan (2014-2019)**, and develop good working relationships with many of our partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

This strategy outlines how we are going to manage our communications activities over the next three years.

We fully recognise the importance of each of the Council's stakeholders, and our strategy will help to ensure that we achieve our ongoing aim of communicating successfully with each and every one of them, so that they feel valued and informed through our 'One Voice' approach.

To explain 'One Voice' a little further – it's about providing messages in a clear, single, unified Council voice to our stakeholders, so that the information they receive is accurate, current and a true reflection of the Council's views and actions.

'One Voice' is also about being as one, and our stakeholders feeling as though they are listened to and therefore have 'a voice' – knowing they have an influence on how the Council is run and an impact on the decisions that are made.

Through this strategy, with stakeholders at the very centre of our communications, we hope that everyone is kept informed about the Council's policies, activities, events and overarching priorities, and that you know how to share your ideas and opinions with us.

Because we understand that the ways in which we communicate are constantly evolving, we have built some flexibility into our plans. For example, if the new 'Twitter' appears and it is clear that stakeholders are using it, where possible we will endeavour to share communications in that way, taking into consideration the time that will need to be invested into it against the overall impact it will have.

We know that we must continue to develop and improve and, with this strategy, we are demonstrating our commitment to clear and consistent communications that meet our needs and those of all our stakeholders – giving everyone 'one voice.'

**Councillor James Palmer**

**Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council**



## 2.0. Communicating the key priorities

Central to our communications, will be the six key priorities outlined in the four year Corporate Plan (2014-2015) document, which builds on the authority's 100 Day commitment to bring more detail to how the Council will improve the District for residents and businesses in East Cambridgeshire.

**These six priorities are:**

- Delivering a financially sound and well managed Council
- Genuinely affordable housing
- A fantastic place to live
- Improving local transport
- Improving infrastructure
- New Jobs and Funding

**To deliver on these priorities, the authority will be working on a number of areas which include:**

- Freezing the East Cambridgeshire element of Council Tax for 2016/2017.
- Support more Community Land Trusts to develop in the district.
- Aim for a 60 per cent recycling rate and ensure bins are put back tidily.
- Oversee delivery of the multiplex cinema.
- Deliver the leisure centre in Ely and review and support leisure services throughout the District.
- Push to ensure the Ely Bypass is built.
- Keep free car parking in our city and town centre car parks.
- Seek to increase car parking spaces at Littleport Station and Angel Drove, Ely.
- Use the business rates retention fund on business development to create new jobs and opportunities for young people.

## 3.0. Our oath and objective

Our Communications **oath:** We will communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with our residents, with our partners, and with each other, in order to promote mutual understanding, and give a better service to the people of East Cambridgeshire in line with achieving our Key Priorities from the Four Year Corporate Plan (2014-2019).

We want to engage with our customers and employees in “conversations” - speaking with them rather than at them, so that instead of just being on the end of information broadcasts, they are being actively encouraged to provide feedback which can be used to improve service delivery and help shape future service development.

The **objective** of the Communications Strategy is:

To establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication through listening to our stakeholders. This will enable us to create a positive, informed and recognisable profile for East Cambridgeshire District Council and its communities.

What's essential is that, through successful communications, stakeholders have a clearer, shared (one voice) understanding and appreciation of the Council's main objectives and key priorities, as well as its values, challenges and ambitions.

#### **4.0. The Strategy in Context**

Research shows that people feel more satisfied with their council when they are better informed about the services they are receiving.

The Communities and Local Government report (Perceptions of Local Government in England 2006) delivered firm evidence to suggest that honest and transparent communications, clearly written, help to instil and develop trust in residents. Successful communications, therefore, can result in more effective services, an improved Council reputation and healthier relationships with stakeholders.

The Code Of Recommended Practice On Local Authority Publicity 2011, in paragraph 4, states: '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.'

In 2014, the Government introduced new rules in The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations, which state that all local government bodies must allow the public and press to film, photograph, blog, tweet, or use other social media to report from their public meetings.

#### **5.0. Our Communications Strategy 2016 to 2019**

To create a positive, informed and recognisable profile for East Cambridgeshire District Council and its communities.

This strategy explains how we plan to communicate with our stakeholders over the next three years.

The purpose of the Communications Strategy is: To establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication in order to create an informed and recognisable profile for East Cambridgeshire District Council and a positive image of the District as a whole.

**A successful strategy will enable us to:**

- Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders

- Keep East Cambridgeshire's residents well informed
- Raise awareness of the Council's priorities
- Address negative or potentially damaging information about Council services
- Support Council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation
- Promote the Council as an employer of choice
- Support elected members in their role as community leaders
- Reach all sections of the community
- Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible
- Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders
- Raise the national profile of East Cambridgeshire

**With all our communications activities our aims are to:**

- Maintain a strong and consistent identity for the Council
- Raise awareness of Council services in order to maximise access to them
- Make East Cambridgeshire an even better place to live, work, invest and visit
- Keep staff informed and promote understanding, e.g. through ECDC Connect
- Promote opportunities for residents, community groups and other stakeholders to engage with the Council – partnership working
- Maintain high customer satisfaction levels with the Council

**We are committed to making all our communications activities:**

- Two-way between the Council and our stakeholders
- Relevant and appropriate for their target audiences
- Easily available, in different formats
- Capable of being easily understood by all sectors of the community (written in as plain English as possible)
- Consistent
- Honest and accountable
- Timely

**6.0. Who are our stakeholders?**

A stakeholder is a person, group, or organisation that can affect or be affected by an organisation's actions, objectives, and policies. Stakeholders have varying needs and different stakeholders are entitled to different considerations. East Cambridgeshire District Council's stakeholders include:

- Residents of East Cambridgeshire
- People and organisations who use the Council's services
- East Cambridgeshire District Council staff
- East Cambridgeshire businesses and their staff
- Schools and colleges in East Cambridgeshire
- Visitors to East Cambridgeshire
- East Cambridgeshire councillors

- Parish Councils
- The Council's partner organisations
- Regional and national media
- Voluntary and Community Groups
- MP's and MEP's
- Our neighbouring local authorities (including outside of Cambridgeshire)
- East Cambs Trading Company

## 7.0. How do we communicate?

7.1. We have a range of spoken and published methods through which we can communicate with you, and you can communicate with us. These include:

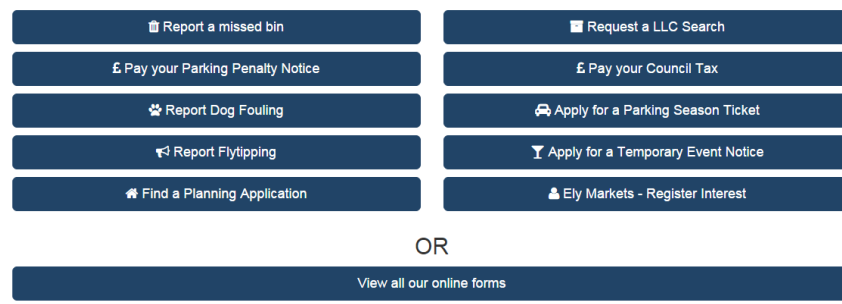
- Our Customer Service Centre
- eastcambs.gov.uk
- Regional and national media
- Email
- Our Twitter profile @EastCambs
- Meetings with Council officers
- Council meetings
- Reports and policy documents published online
- Events
- Public consultation

7.2. Our **Self-Service portal** cuts out the middle man and gives you the information you need in the most efficient way.

Information is now at your fingertips. Simply visit <http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/> and click on the Self-Service tab. You will then be presented with this screen:



If you can't find what you're looking for, click on the Self-Service lock image, to view further options (see below):



PENDING NEW WEBSITE

## 8.0. What do we communicate?

### All communications

We engage with our various stakeholder groups about the Council's services, facilities, actions and priorities. Information is provided and requested on:

- **Progress towards delivering the Council's key priorities from its Corporate Plan for 2014 -2019**
- What services the Council provides
- Where and how to access these services
- Changes to these services
- How the Council works
- Who local councillors are and what their role is
- Where and how the Council can help and support stakeholders
- Where to go if we can't help
- How stakeholders are or can become involved with the Council's services
- What the Council's policies are
- Council events and activities
- Events and activities in East Cambridgeshire, including Oliver Cromwell's House
- How stakeholders can influence the Council's policies, plans and activities
- How to contact Council officers and members
- How to provide feedback and opinions on different Council policies, decisions, and activities
- Who our partners are and how we work with them
- The Council's role in the wider community
- Successes.

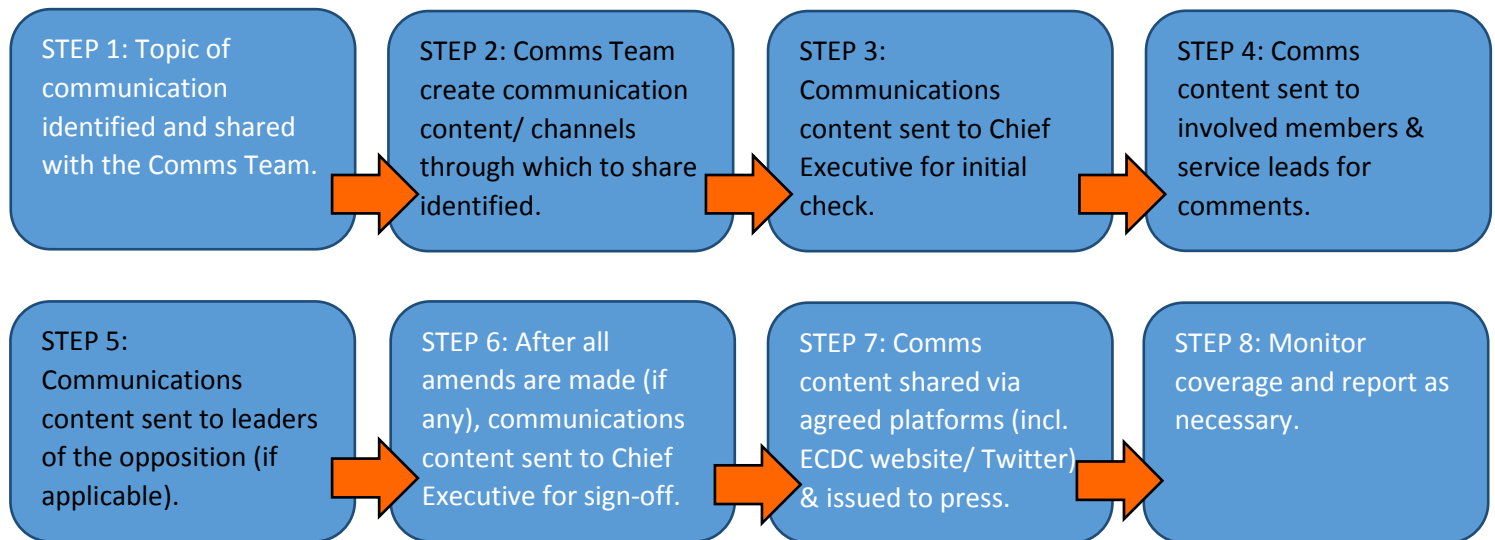
COULD WE BE MORE SPECIFIC – DATES WHEN INFO IS PUBLISHED ON THE WEBSITE/ EMAILED OUT.

## 9.0. Who communicates?

Communication is the responsibility of every officer and member of the Council.



We have a Communications Team that manages the Council’s communications by ensuring that information is exchanged to its stakeholders in an accurate and consistent manner. The communications process is shown below:



## 10.0. Corporate identity and branding

To ensure that the Council is viewed in the most positive way possible by all stakeholders, it is essential that brand standards and guidelines are adhered to.

These are:

- All staff to have unified email footers.
- Same East Cambridgeshire District Council logo to be used on each document.
- All staff to use same PowerPoint presentation template.

## 11.0. Evaluation

We will regularly monitor our communications activities in order to gauge their success. Where appropriate, we will adapt our methods and messages to ensure that we continue to meet our objectives. We have in place formal measurement mechanisms for media relations **(Appendix 3)**.

These are in line with communications best practice, and indicate our progress in promoting positive media coverage of the Council and the District. We will continue to use the results of both formal and informal reporting to measure the effectiveness of our communications. See **Appendix 2** for our **Evaluation** pro forma, which is to be completed on a **6 monthly basis**.

**Appendix 1 – Summary action plan**

<b>What</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>Media relations</b>	<p>Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders</p> <p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Address negative or potentially damaging information about Council services</p> <p>Raise East Cambridgeshire’s national profile</p>
<b>Community engagement</b>	<p>Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders</p> <p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<b>Council publications</b>	<p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities through press releases (always available on the ECDC website) and through social media.</p> <p>Address negative or potentially damaging information about Council services</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<b>Reports</b>	<p>Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders</p> <p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p>

	<p>Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<b>Leaflets and posters</b>	<p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities</p> <p>Address negative or potentially damaging information about Council services</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<b>Social media</b>	<p>Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders</p> <p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Address negative or potentially damaging information about Council services</p> <p>Support Council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community</p> <p>Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<b>Publicity and awareness campaigns</b>	<p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Campaigns Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities</p>

	<p>Support council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<p><b>Internal communications</b></p>	<p>Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders</p> <p>Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities</p> <p>Address negative or potentially damaging information about council services</p> <p>Support Council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation</p> <p>Promote the Council as an employer of choice</p> <p>Support elected members in their role as community leaders</p> <p>Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible</p> <p>Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>
<p><b>Corporate identity and branding</b></p>	<p>To make the Council truly recognisable and visible, so that residents fully recognise the Council’s roles and activities, and engage with them</p> <p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Promote and reinforce respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders</p>

<p><b>Website</b></p>	<p>Keep East Cambridgeshire’s residents well informed</p> <p>Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities</p> <p>Promote the Council as an employer of choice</p> <p>Support elected members in their role as community leaders</p> <p>Reach all sections of the community Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible Promote respect and trust between the council and its stakeholders</p>
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## Appendix 2 – Our performance

### Objectives

<b>We said</b>	<b>We did</b>
We will manage the media effectively to promote and defend the Council.	
We will communicate well with the staff so that they become advocates for the Council. We will achieve this by creating a monthly 'ECDC Connect' newsletter which will be sent to all staff and members, and will report to management as to how well-used each issue was.	
We will publish regular information on the Council's activities, successes, key issues and progress towards achieving the Corporate Priorities.	
We will use the ECDC website and Twitter to communicate our messages, including giving live updates at elections.	
We will inform people of how they can get involved in looking after their communities, e.g. recycling information, grant availability, events, public health, projects etc.	

### Press coverage

Below is an example of the table we will use to monitor the performance of press releases.

	Jan – Feb 2016	Mar – Apr 2016	May – Jun 2016	Jul – Aug 2016	Sep – Oct 2016	Nov – Dec 2016
Number of press releases issued						
Percentage of issued press releases published in the media						
Percentage of media coverage that is positive or neutral						

**Internal communications survey**

We fully recognise the importance of clear and consistent internal communication, therefore every 6 months a survey will be issued to staff members for their feedback, which will be used to inform future actions to improve this further.

**Target setting**

Once activities have been monitored, we will evaluate successes and areas for improvement, which will then enable us to set new communications targets.

## **Appendix 3 – Communications Team service standards**

### **The Communications Team is responsible for:**

- Promoting the Council's Key Priorities
- Promoting Council services
- Helping to improve the profile of East Cambridgeshire
- Communicating with staff and councillors.

### **Our media service**

We deal with all requests/enquiries from journalists on behalf of staff and councillors.

### **Contact us:**

By telephone: **01638 741830** between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday

By email: [comms@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:comms@eastcambs.gov.uk)

By letter: The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely CB7 4EE

### **Journalists can expect us to:**

- Foster a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship
- Treat them with courtesy and respect
- Regard them as partners in providing people with timely, accurate information
- Make every effort to assist them with their requests/enquiries.

### **We expect journalists to:**

- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- Report fairly and accurately on stories about the Council and the District
- Give the Council a reasonable opportunity to provide them with facts and respond to views or accusations in opposition to the Council.



## Appendix 4 – Press releases

Press releases are recorded by the Communications Team using this table format:

Date	Press release headline	Reference	Author	Seen by	Date signed-off by Chief Executive	Date in publication	Link(s) to online article(s)	Positive (P) /neutral (N) coverage
22/02/16	New bus shelters a welcome addition to Market Street	PR/19Feb 16/BusShelters	TT	BH LD DB	19/02/16	24/02/16 (EN)	<a href="http://www.ely-news.co.uk/Residents-praise-new-bus-shelters-Ely-8217-s/story-28789713-detail/story.html">http://www.ely-news.co.uk/Residents-praise-new-bus-shelters-Ely-8217-s/story-28789713-detail/story.html</a>	P

### Publications key:

Ely News – **EN**

Ely Standard – **ES**

Cambridge News – **CN**

The MJ – **MJ**

**ETC.**

## Appendix 5 – Communications blueprint

**The blueprint should be used as a checklist in order to inform the best course of action when starting key projects and activities, with the aim to be proactive rather than reactive.**

<b>Background</b>	Provide a brief analysis explaining the context in which the communications will take place. Outline what events or actions have occurred to give rise to this planned activity. How does this fit with other relevant communications activities? <b>What Corporate Priority does this deliver?</b>
<b>Aim and objectives</b>	The aim should clearly follow on from the background above – outlined as a primary communications task to support the delivery of one or more of the Council’s Key Priorities  Objectives should be clear, concise and achievable, with outcomes that are capable of being measured against one or more priority.
<b>Target audience</b>	The communications activity should be able to identify a clearly defined audience or set of audiences and demonstrate how the objectives relate to each. Audience needs should be considered, such as how they choose to absorb this information/use of appropriate communication channels.
<b>Key messages</b>	What are the key, known facts that won’t change? What is the aim? What is the purpose? What Key Priority does relate to? What will the effect be on stakeholders? Is there a positive? Is the message accessible and understandable to all?
<b>Strategic approach - methods/tools/media</b>	What elements comprise the communications activity? (People, places, tasks). What media channels/tools will be used?
<b>Budget</b>	Is additional communications material required? Is there a budget? What is the total cost of this activity and what is the breakdown of costs by activity?

<b>Timings</b>	When is this activity likely to begin? Over what period will it continue? Is there a before and after? (E.g. major event – recovery phase). What other relevant council activities or events will coincide with this activity? What time restrictions are we working to? What time commitments have been set? Are there other factors that could influence timings, e.g. elections and purdah/ notice periods/embargoes etc.
<b>Who's involved?</b>	Who are the key spokespeople, or chief spokesperson for this? (members/ service leads/ officers) Who will be providing the facts? Are there any other people we need to consider? This includes the need for public consultations and press conferences, when required.
<b>Evaluation</b>	How will this activity be measured against its aims relating to the Key Priorities? What are the criteria for success?

# One Voice

**Communications for everyone**



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL