



South
Derbyshire
District Council



Communications Strategy 2016 – 2021



Ahead of the Game

Effective communication is key to the success of any business or organisation.

Establishing a two-way conversation that engages stakeholders, informs about services, celebrates achievement and creates a culture of openness, honesty and trust is crucial to long-term prosperity.

However, in a crowded marketplace of social media and digital channels at the centre of a world with information available on tap, standing out from the crowd can be far from easy.

South Derbyshire District Council prides itself on its track record of delivering high-quality services to those living in, working in and visiting one of the fastest-growing areas in the country.

Like all local authorities, though, it is facing up to the tough task of further developing and improving these services against a backdrop of reduced core funding, financial pressures, a changing media landscape and soaring expectations.

The Council must find budget savings in its General Fund of £850,000 by March 2018. Never has its mantra of 'doing more with less' been so relevant.

In its previous Corporate Communications Strategy, the focus was put firmly on moving away from traditional reactive communication to a pro-active online approach. During its lifespan the Channel Shift Strategy was launched, while internally a new intranet was designed and implemented.

The trend is reflected across the local government sector. Research into the communications practices of other authorities has shown a clear evolution towards digital methods across the board.

While the work of the Communications team is central to keeping residents, customers, stakeholders and other parties informed, it is not exclusive to it. Consistency of message both internally and externally, to and from all staff and Elected Members, will be pivotal in achieving high levels of performance.

This strategy maps out how, in line with its Equality Policy and against the priorities laid down in its Corporate Plan, South Derbyshire District Council will embrace the fast-changing world of communications to stay ahead of the game for the benefit of those it serves.

Communications Priorities

Our Top 10





Day-to-day Communications



Promoting and raising awareness of what the Council does



Promoting the Council's values and priorities



Demonstrating how the Council spends public money



Publicising Council events, activities and opportunities



Upholding and playing a key role in the democratic process



Helping to deliver digital services and solutions



Developing channels for effective engagement



Highlighting partnership and community working



Maximising commercial opportunities



Creating modern and consistent branding



Doing more with less



Supporting staff and Elected Members in communicating effectively

Aim

'To deliver consistently high-class, effective, efficient and measurable communications across all channels to support the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan, ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and satisfied.'

How We Communicate



Social Media



SDDC Website



The Media



Better Online (the intranet)



Housing News (quarterly)



**Face-to-face
Customer Services/
Councillor Surgeries**



**Internal Communications
Staff briefings, Email,
One-to-ones**



**Council /
Committee
Meetings**



**SMS & IVR
Messages**



**Consultation
Exercises and
Events**



**Reports
and Policy
Documents**



**Branding
Posters, Leaflets etc**

Our Stakeholders

- South Derbyshire residents
- Service users
- Council staff
- Elected Members
- Parish councils
- Local businesses
- Visitors/tourists
- Local, regional and national media
- Derbyshire County Council and neighbouring authorities
- Partner organisations
- Community organisations/the third sector
- D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership



Here is a closer look at our key communications channels:

The Media

While the Council's long-established strong relationship with the local media continues, the landscape has changed considerably in the past decade – particularly with regard to the written press.

The ever-increasing popularity of the internet and digital world has hit circulation figures hard.

However, local titles can now boast a bigger audience than ever before thanks to their daily website visitors and social media followers.

The Trinity Mirror-owned Burton Mail, for example, attracts (*as at October 2016) around 25,000 unique visitors (UVs) to its website each day, with more than 73,300 page views, while its Facebook page has in excess of 20,000 'likes' (*as at May 2017). The Derby Telegraph (*as at May 2017) has around 80,000 UVs to its website, with 250,000 page views, and has around 53,000 Facebook page 'likes.'

This has led to a 'reverse publishing' model where news is shared through digital channels before it is even considered for print, with members of the public encouraged to be content providers or 'citizen journalists.' It is this group of activists, armed with the tools and ever more keen to play their part in local life, that the Council must consider how best to engage.

The Council's Communications team distributes on average 12 to 15 press releases and deals with between 15 and 30 media queries in a typical month, with statements issued where necessary to uphold the authority's reputation and radio/television interview opportunities arranged as requested.

While times have changed, a significant proportion of residents still rely on newspapers, radio and television for their news in South Derbyshire, a predominantly rural District where for many outlying villages broadband speeds are a major issue.

The Council's model of distributing press releases, uploading them to its website and backing that up with promotion through social media channels to drive web traffic, is still a relevant one. Research has shown that it reflects the media practices of 15 'most suitable groups' - other local authorities of a similar size to South Derbyshire District Council and with similar characteristics in terms of their populations and urban/rural mix.

Strong content, complemented by images and video where appropriate, is crucial to positive engagement.



The Website

Around 33,000 web sessions are currently taking place each month at www.south-derbys.gov.uk, which has increased by almost 10 per cent compared to just three years ago and more than 40 per cent since the beginning of 2010.

In recent times a review of content and web traffic has taken place to help us understand what information people are looking for and areas of particularly high contact.

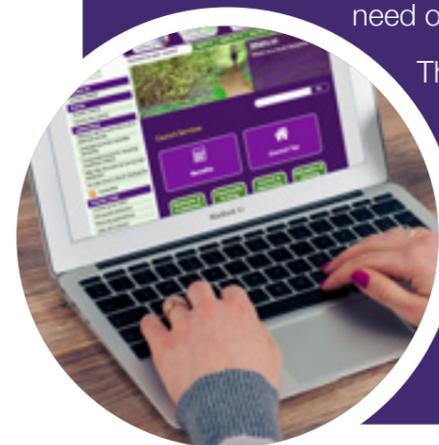
The data established that 40 per cent of all contacts handled by Customer Services staff concerned Council Tax and Benefits enquiries.

Based on the findings, and to improve website functionality, two home page buttons linking to Council Tax and Benefits landing pages were introduced, literally 'channel shifting' people away from phone and face-to-face contact by allowing them to more easily access the information they need online. A third 'Pay for it' button was introduced soon after.

The Council recognises the power of its website as a one-stop shop of services and information and plans to launch a new site in the 2017-18 financial year, satisfying Corporate Plan aims of maintaining customer focus and advancing digital inclusion.

The ambition is to establish and maximise transactional, task-oriented online services which are flexible, accessible and easy to use.

Provider Web Labs Ltd is working with the Council to deliver this project.



Social Media

A simple and cost-effective way to reach a wider audience, the Council has seized the opportunity that social media presents.

Our Twitter account (@SDDC) has around 6,900 followers, which has increased by around 1,300 since January 1, 2016 and compares well with neighbouring authorities.

Though we do not currently have a central corporate Facebook page several departments run their own, with regular support and annual training provided. The Council also has a YouTube account (South Derbyshire DC) and has begun to trial the use of video.

According to UK communications regulator Ofcom the social media scene continues to grow quickly - more than seven in 10 adult internet users now have a social media profile and ownership of smartphones and tablets is booming.

We are reaching a huge audience via social media and, in a June 2016 survey, 76 per cent of people listed it as their preferred option for keeping in touch with Council news and information.

In a Twitter poll, 54 per cent of respondents thought the Council's current social media content was 'good' or 'excellent' with only eight per cent saying it was below average.





Internal Communications

Our Internal Communications Strategy identifies the way forward for engaging and communicating with employees, setting out the aims, aspirations, channels and action plan to achieve this.

Our internal communications efforts strive to unite our staff and Elected Members, create a sense of pride, instil our values and reflect the aims of the Corporate Plan, demonstrating to everyone the part they play.

The current channels include team meetings, team briefs, one-to-ones, email, Better online (the intranet) and noticeboards. A recent survey was conducted to help understand the quality of these channels, in which 91 per cent of people said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with internal communications overall.

The very latest trends and influences are being considered, alongside the needs of staff, as the Council looks to review and create a quality system of internal communications with the following objectives:

- Improve the flow of communication between the leadership team, Elected Members and staff to ensure team members understand key messages and the impact of them.
- Allow questions and feedback to be shared between directorates and up and down the communication chain.
- Define and promote the internal communication channels available, including the purpose and audience for each channel.
- Increase the use of Better online by educating users, developing new features and promoting content to users.
- Embed the Corporate Plan 2016-21 and ensure that staff understand their role in delivering it.



Branding

With the introduction of the Corporate Plan 2016-21, the Council's approach to branding is evolving.

Using pre-existing corporate colours the design style has been modernised and refreshed to demonstrate a new direction for the Council.

A Venn diagram watermark is being used to link the Corporate Plan and branded materials together, the key elements of the design style being:

- The Venn diagram watermark;
- Primary colours including specific shades of purple and green;
- A set of secondary colours to be used that complement the primary colours;
- Use of photographs to showcase the District; and
- Use of icons and vectors to illustrate or add visual impact.

The refreshed look is being introduced across the Council throughout official documents and digital channels, with a new, consistent style for promotional materials being devised to complement the new brand.

With local authorities under increasing pressure to deliver more with less, branding and its use in terms of innovation, commercialisation and marketing is perhaps more important than ever.



Consultation

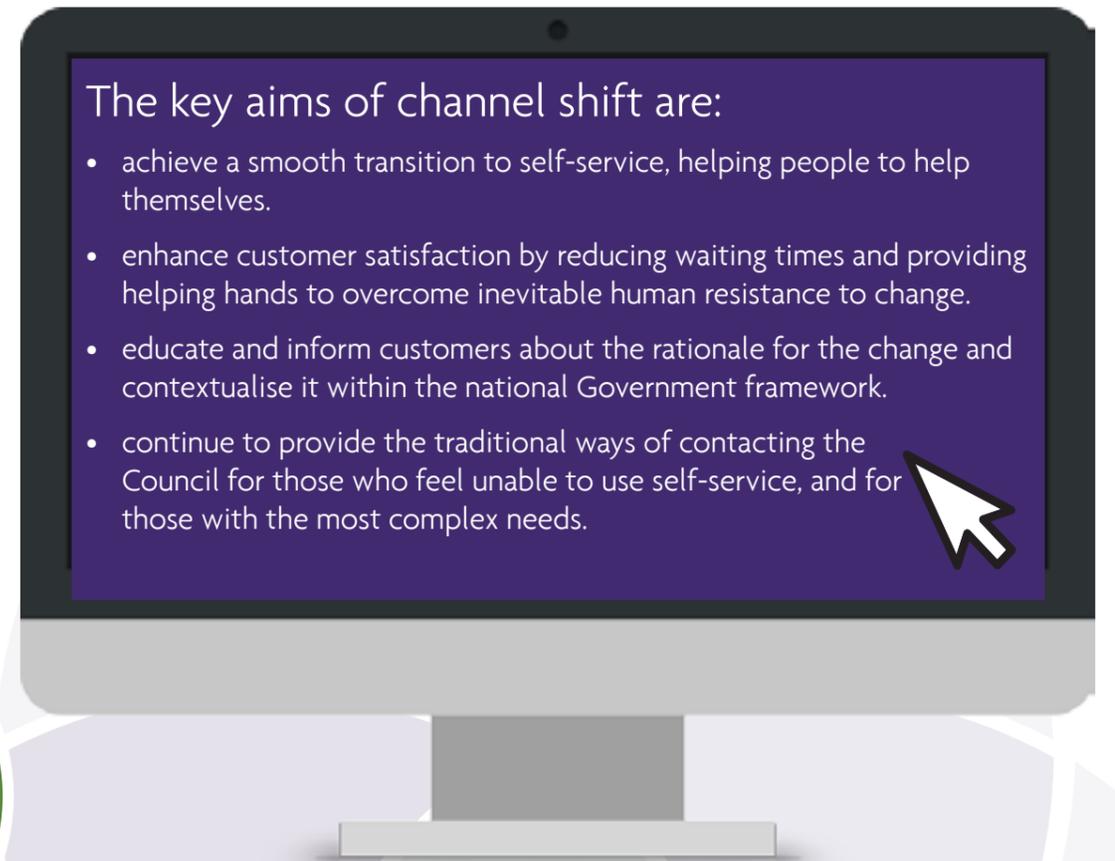
The Council has a statutory duty to consult on various matters affecting the community and its focus is on creating a culture of empowerment and engagement in public services, by ensuring that people have more opportunities to have their say.

This change is reflected in the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy, which aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities who are informed and involved in decision-making, with the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of life across South Derbyshire.

Media relations and communications play an important role and help ensure that residents are kept up to date with services, as well as being informed about all Council consultations and community engagement events.

Each year a Consultation Annual Report is presented to Elected Members, detailing how consultation activities supported the delivery of key priorities.





The key aims of channel shift are:

- achieve a smooth transition to self-service, helping people to help themselves.
- enhance customer satisfaction by reducing waiting times and providing helping hands to overcome inevitable human resistance to change.
- educate and inform customers about the rationale for the change and contextualise it within the national Government framework.
- continue to provide the traditional ways of contacting the Council for those who feel unable to use self-service, and for those with the most complex needs.

Channel Shift and a Digital Future

It has been a time of unprecedented change for local authorities. In South Derbyshire, where there are now more than 41,000 homes registered to pay council tax and a population of around 100,000, the demand on services is higher than ever before.

Customer Services has borne the brunt of this demand and, faced with an increasingly complex and fast-changing benefits system to administer, staff were typically handling between 6,000 and 7,000 face-to-face contacts each month by the end of 2014, with an average handling time of seven minutes per customer.

Aside from the lengthy queues and waiting times, face-to-face contact is expensive.

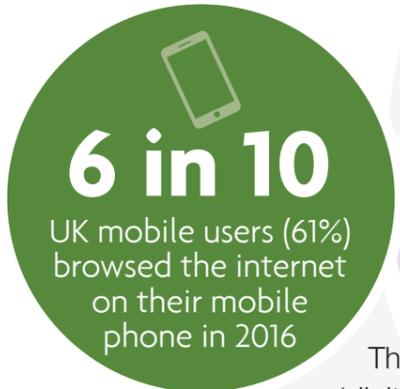
Set against a national Government agenda of digital inclusion, something had to give – and the Channel Shift Strategy was born.

Aiming to get customers ‘online, not in line’ and fitting hand in hand with the ethos of doing more with less, a process of gathering, processing and analysing information begun. The end goal was to not only provide customers with the means to self-serve, but positively encourage them to do so by designing services so good that they would prefer to.

Analysis of the data gave a clear picture of the face-to-face customer demographic, as well as an indication that a high proportion would be more than happy to use the internet, via mobiles and tablets, to access services.

Armed with the information, a specialist team known as the Media Forum set about developing intervention strategies to ensure that not only would demand be met, but that essential resources in customer services would be freed up.

These have included redesigning the Council’s website based on traffic trends, introducing new telephony systems and payment machines, designing an online guide to council tax bills and creating a recycling video.



The driver behind it all is the Government’s Digital Inclusion Strategy, which aims to make services ‘digital by default’ by increasing online access and giving people the necessary skills to use the internet.

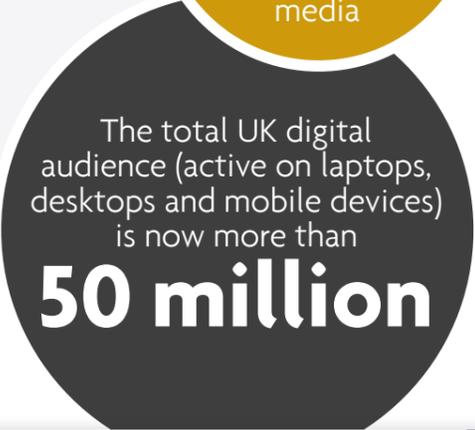
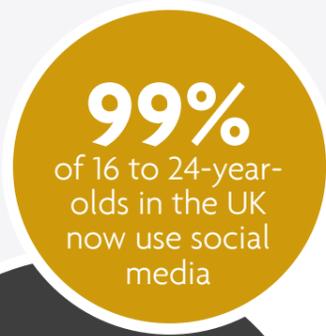
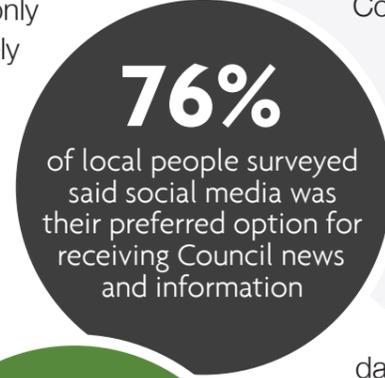
The requirement for councils to fall in line with this strategy is compelling. Both nationally and locally there is a need to work more efficiently, while satisfying customer demand for quick and convenient access to services, at times and in ways that suit them.

Social media will play an important role as our audience continues to grow organically, attracted by strong content and the opportunity for instant and meaningful engagement with the Council.

However, the Council’s new website is our opportunity to achieve true channel shift by creating a transaction-led resource that will change the way people in South Derbyshire access information and conduct their business indefinitely.

It must become our primary customer information source and number one contact mechanism, a ‘shop window’ for all Council services including everything from recycling collection dates and paying council tax to checking business rates and looking at leisure activities.

Everyone within the Council needs to take ownership for the upkeep of the website, which will demonstrate the vision for South Derbyshire and highlight the District’s desire and plans for growth.



Our Objectives

Set against the Corporate Plan objectives, a series of communications objectives have been agreed to reflect the Council's current focus. These objectives will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.

People

Organisational objective	Communications objective
Enable people to live independently	Celebrate success stories, such as maintaining grant funding to the voluntary and community sector. Share outcomes of the Supported Housing Service review with staff and more widely where necessary. Publicise the availability of new and adapted developments, as well as resident satisfaction and any successes relating to efforts to reduce tenancy turnover. Help to engage health professionals about the benefits of services like Telecare to broaden income streams.
Develop the workforce of South Derbyshire to support growth in relation to aspirations, employability, skills and travel to work	Continue to help build on the success of the Swadlincote Jobs and Skills Fair, with a focus on human interest stories. Support efforts to raise aspirations of youngsters and promote employability and entrepreneurship. Increase awareness of volunteering opportunities/training and promote the Modern Apprentice scheme. Support the growth and development of community volunteers.
Protect and help support the most vulnerable, including those affected by financial challenges	Work with partner agencies including the CAB to further initiatives that support the vulnerable, such as the Safe Place initiative. Continue to promote and celebrate our bid to become a Dementia-Friendly Community, our work to attain the NPSS Bronze Standard for Homelessness and the ongoing roll-out of Universal Credit. Promote initiatives designed to keep people in their own homes, as well as sports and leisure activities for targeted groups. Continue to develop internal/cross-departmental processes to ensure effective shared knowledge and good practice.
Use existing tools and powers to take appropriate enforcement action	Publicise successful prosecutions and enforcement actions supported by or initiated by the Council, as well as partnership campaigns and initiatives with the police and other agencies. Assist with statutory consultation where appropriate.
Increase levels of participation in sport, health, environmental and physical activities	Support the implementation of the new Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Strategy, with a focus on the wide variety of facilities, activities, opportunities and events available in South Derbyshire for people of all ages. Target younger audiences through social media engagement. The new-look website will offer ease and convenience for booking activities, as well as another platform to celebrate key events in South Derbyshire.
Reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill	Targeted campaigns across all channels to reach new audiences and educate residents – particularly those on new housing developments - on the importance of recycling, composting and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill. Raise awareness of good recycling practices and share top tips, particularly at peak times such as Christmas. Our quirky recycling video, describing what goes into which bin, will assist with this. Help to cement positive behavioural change brought about by the Waste less, Save more initiative on a local level, for example via the SnapBox and Fab Foods projects.



Place

Organisational objective	Communications objective
Facilitate and deliver a range of integrated and sustainable housing and community infrastructure	Support aspirations to increase the supply of affordable homes in the District and better understand housing needs. Consultation will continue to take place with a view to achieving the adoption of the Local Plan Part 2. Complement efforts to bring the District's empty homes back into use and identify the best communications methods for contacting those involved. Support the delivery of outcomes from the Housing Strategy 2016-21.
Enhance understanding of the planning process	Deliver a website that contains clear information, enhances clarity through web GIS and helps to simplify the planning process for members of the public. SDDC is consulting with interested parties on developing Neighbourhood Plans, while a series of in-depth parish council briefings are under consideration to enhance understanding of the planning process.
Help maintain low crime and anti-social behaviour levels in the District	Focus on events and outcomes that build on the District's reputation as a safe place to live, work and visit (in the financial year 2016-17, the District had 38.81 crimes per 1,000 population, compared to 81.8 in Derby City and 51.95 in Derbyshire as a whole). Support the delivery of actions within the Safer South Derbyshire Community Safety Partnership Plan. Keep the public informed of local crime issues and hotspots, while helping to educate youngsters on issues including hate crime, drugs and sexual exploitation. Publicise the positive and diversionary activities taking place.
Connect with our communities, helping them feel safe and secure	Publicise Area Forums and other opportunities for community/tenant involvement, while arming staff with the knowledge of how to reach residents and volunteers through digital/social media channels. Offer appropriate crime prevention advice in response to spikes in crime, while celebrating community cohesion through initiatives like the Dreamscheme and Safer Neighbourhood concept. Promote events around responsible dog ownership and littering, utilising digital channels to spread the public health message where necessary. Celebrate significant security investments in the Council's housing stock and improvements to its repairs service.
Support provision of cultural facilities and activities throughout the District	Work closely with Swadlincote TIC and other organisations to promote the area's rich and diverse culture, and continue to gauge online feedback on the National Forest Walking Festival. Offer appropriate guidance on how to publicise future plans for Rosliston Forestry Centre and support the roll-out of development plans for Green Bank and Etwall Leisure Centres.
Deliver services that keep the District clean and healthy	Continue to raise awareness of PSPO powers, as well as the public health impacts and interventions around improving air quality and minimising noise pollution. Share our informative Mouldy Matters video with interested parties to reduce exposure to mould. Support efforts to tackle fly-tipping, focusing particularly on the innovative solutions being used, publicising online reporting methods and highlighting successful enforcement action. Promote the implementation of a climate change adaptation strategy and local flooding resilience.



Progress

Organisational objective	Communications objective
Work to attract further inward investment	Build on the District's positive reputation of being 'open for business,' celebrating the success of both large and small enterprises. Herald the creation of new jobs and businesses in South Derbyshire, as well as support efforts to keep unemployment rates low. Publicise a new investor prospectus and vacant commercial property bulletin, while supporting the delivery of actions within the Economic Development Strategy.
Unlock development potential and ensure the continuing growth of vibrant town centres	Promote events and initiatives that help town centres to thrive. Further expand the use of the Swadlincote Town Team's social media offering to educate people of its purpose. Work with businesses where necessary to share key success stories and encourage their participation in initiatives like the Swadlincote Wedding Fair. Support the delivery of the Swadlincote Townscape Heritage Scheme and the project to revamp the Diana Memorial Garden.
Work to maximise the employment, training and leisure uses of The National Forest by residents and increase the visitor spend by tourists	Focus on South Derbyshire's unique position at the heart of The National Forest, working with the National Forest Company, Swadlincote TIC and partners to market it as a facility that can encourage sporting participation and promote health. Raise awareness of activities in the What's On guide through the website and Twitter and continue to use the #SDwhatson hashtag to build a brand. Continue to support tourism growth by heralding events such as the Festival of Leisure. Promote South Derbyshire's evening economy as part of a new project included in the Corporate Action Plan.
Help to influence and develop the infrastructure for economic growth	Keep the community up to date with progress on delivery of key infrastructure projects, such as those identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
Provide business support and promote innovation and access to finance, including in rural areas	Support the South Derbyshire Business Advice Service and the training opportunities it provides, using case studies and targeted social media campaigns to promote potential opportunities. Celebrate business growth created through good environmental practices and positive regulation.



Outcomes

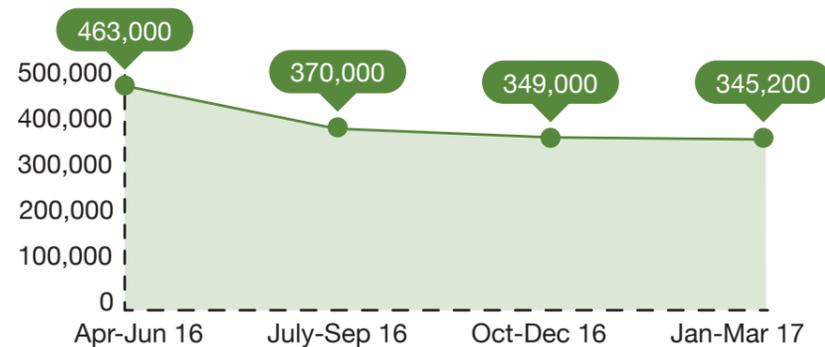
Organisational objective	Communications objective
Maintain financial health	Continue to purvey the Council's ethos of doing more with less and play a key role in utilising marketing techniques to maximise commercial income. Deliver a more transactional website that supports this aim. Assist with campaigns to minimise rent arrears and clamp down on benefit fraud.
Achieve good Corporate Governance	Produce the SDDC annual report to demonstrate key achievements and promote the Council's Annual Governance Statement. Ensure compliance with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance and maintain an effective work programme. Continue to evolve the Corporate Plan 2016-21 and raise awareness of its role.
Maintain customer focus	Through the new website, online forms and Channel Shift Strategy, focus on shaping and improving services around customer demand and expectation (around 33,000 monthly web sessions took place in 2016/17, an increase of more than 4% on the previous year, with more than half of these made via mobile devices). Respond to media enquiries within two working days and develop a Social Media Strategy to increase following and provide innovative options for people to engage with the Council. Continue a phased roll-out of new branding, creating a clear corporate identity and focusing on reputational excellence. Support relevant consultation work (e.g. changes to the Council Tax Reduction Support Scheme).
Be aware of and plan for financial, legal and environmental risks	Pro-actively prepare for risk scenarios and focus on upholding the Council's reputation at all times. Create an emergency situation website banner. Assist in the production of a new ICT Strategy and action plan. Support work internally to educate staff on anti-fraud processes, risk management strategy and strengthening resilience.
Promote and enable active democracy	Help to maintain a culture of openness and accountability through continuing good relations with residents and the media. Promote democracy with schools and young people and encourage voter registration on a continual basis. Support the delivery of any elections and efforts to revise the electoral register.
Enhance environmental standards	Support the development of public spaces, District-wide climate change action and the work of Environmental Health in fighting environmental crime, improving air quality and raising environmental/sustainability standards. Help implement and maintain the process(es) needed for internal and external communications relevant to the ISO14001 environmental management system. Facilitate the consistent and reliable communication of compliance obligations, awareness and competency requirements and respond to relevant environmental communications, subject to the needs and expectations of interested parties. Focus on flooding awareness, educating residents on managing emergency incidents/building resilience, supporting the development of a local low carbon economy and energy services which reduce fuel poverty across South Derbyshire.
Maintain a skilled workforce	Communicate clearly with staff through a range of internal channels, celebrating their achievements, providing regular and useful information and highlighting training/learning opportunities. Produce an action plan for phase two of Better online (the Intranet). Help to ensure mandatory training compliance and play a role in creating a refreshed and relevant PDR process. Work against the Internal Communications Strategy to unite staff and ensure the system is fit for purpose going forward. Support the implementation of the Healthy Workplaces scheme across the organisation and help to compose/promote external awards entries where appropriate.
Promote inclusion	Promote the wide variety of activities taking place across the District aimed at people of all ages and backgrounds. Appreciate different audiences and the channels best suited to communicating with them. Build on the themes of our Corporate Equalities and Safeguarding work, raise awareness of individual responsibilities and focus on key projects like the Dementia-Friendly District bid. The new website must offer accessible online services and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, meeting a range of accessibility standards including translation services, compatibility with screen readers, speech recognition software and meet Level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Continue to promote the Disability Confident employer scheme as part of the Council's recruitment procedure.



Communications Dashboard

Our Communications Dashboard has been designed to reflect our performance in terms of media coverage, social media, the website and Better Online, as well as key communications projects. It is updated monthly and presented to the Council's Performance Board quarterly to help inform future communications activities and priorities. Below is the annual dashboard, which compares 2016-17 to 2015-16.

Social Media - Twitter Impressions



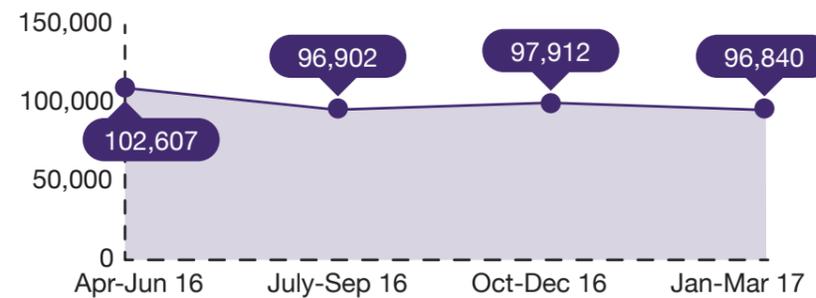
■ Impressions

Number of times a tweet is seen in a timeline

6,800 ↑
Followers 14.4%

7,080 ↑
Likes 24.3%
(NB from 9/9/16)

Website - Sessions



■ Sessions

Number of website visits

219,834 ↑
Users 8.8%

1,183,255 ↑
Page Views 0.6%

Projects and Campaigns

Communications Strategies

Both documents were approved by committee in December 2016. The Communications Strategy sets out how we plan to keep residents, customers, stakeholders and other parties engaged and informed about Council services, successes and achievements. The Internal Communications Strategy identifies the way forward for engaging with employees and Elected Members.

Corporate Plan

Staff from across the Council attend a Corporate Plan Focus Group and, based on the current outcomes, and action plan was drawn up to raise awareness of our overall vision and to put in place measures that will help guide cultural change. A Corporate Plan refresh workshop programme, targeting both Elected Members and Unit Managers, was completed in early 2017 and updated projects and measures for 2017/18 agreed.

The Media

The increasing focus on 'digital first' approach by the press was reflected in a significant drop in media quires in 2016/17, with more and more content being sourced through social media. This, along with the continued growth of the Council's online audience, will be factored into our upcoming social media strategy.

Channel Shift

The creation of the new SDDC website is at an advanced stage. By March 31, 2017, content had been migrated across for 27 of 30 sections and more than 50 online forms had been produced and published.

Better Online

75,092 ↑
Sessions 12.5%

146,299 ↑
Page Views 22.9%

64.9% ↑
Bounce Rate 3.4%

8,527 ↑
New hits N/A
(NB from Sep 2016 onwards)

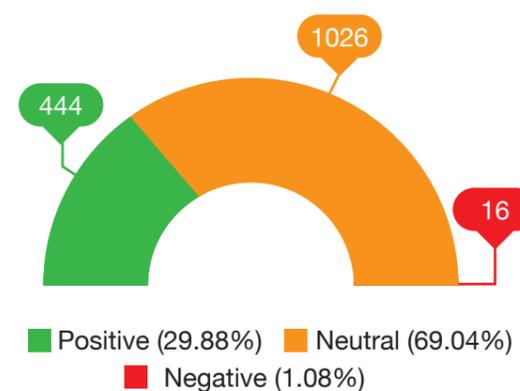
Top Search Terms

Pay | Leave | Overtime | Car |
JEQ | Pay scales | Letter |
ID badge | Sickness | Expenses

Most read articles

Blog, FM - launch of Better online (195)
Housing Director's New Year message (148)
Fresh faces, Liz Booth (143)
Christmas jumper day (143)
Chief Executive's Christmas message (134)
Pay and grading blog, FM (128)

Media Coverage - Tone



183 ↓
Press releases 5.2%

243 ↓
Media enquiries 36.4%

Positive Transformation

Little over 25 years ago, the World Wide Web was born.

Today it has around 2.5 billion users across the globe, having transformed almost every aspect of public, private and work life, underpinning the economy, creating entire new industries and changing the way we all talk to each other.

The world of communications never stands still. While people's demand for news, information and services remains undimmed, the way they choose to access them has altered almost immeasurably.

Newspapers have long realised it. With print sales in sharp decline their focus has turned to an online audience which is often just as keen to share and participate in the news process as the paid employees of the media.

This strategy sets out a clear direction for the Council - while press releases will always have their place, digital communications is now king.

More than seven in 10 adults now have a social media profile. Smartphone users spend nearly two hours a day using the internet on their mobile phone. Almost 40 million mobile users could access 4G services at the last count.

The statistics are undeniable.

We must not lose sight of the fact, however, that 4.8 million UK adults today have still never used the internet. With research suggesting that possessing basic digital skills can help the average UK household save more than £700 a year, local authorities have a duty to ensure these people are not left behind.

Shaping digital services is about understanding customers' needs rather than wants. That means an 'inside out' approach, where the most successful councils are able to put themselves in a service user's shoes and create solutions that work for them.

With a new website just around the corner and increasingly popular social media channels to boot, South Derbyshire District Council is well placed at the forefront of the digital revolution. It is ready to engage with a modern audience and, based on their desires, to offer them what they want – news, information and services at their fingertips.

People, Place and Progress - this is a communications strategy that will help to engage residents fully with the vision to make South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit.

