

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

2024-2029

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the Communications Team is to protect and enhance the reputation of the Council, explain policy and decisions and help citizens to access the support they need all while working towards the organisation's strategic priorities for the benefit of the people of West Dunbartonshire.

West Dunbartonshire Council has a strategic ambition of delivering services which build on the strengths and resilience of its neighbourhoods and supporting all residents to fulfil their individual potential, and that of their communities.

As an organisation, we are striving towards this with a focus on four key strategic priorities – Our Communities – Resilient and Thriving; Our Environment – A Greener Future; Our Economy – Strong and Flourishing; and Our Council – Inclusive and Adaptable. The Communications team has a vital role to play in supporting the organisation in achieving these.

This strategy sets out the strategic communications objectives of the Council's Communications Team over the next five years, ensuring continued delivery of first-class and trusted communications which support behavioural change and ensure residents and employees are listened to and engaged in the Council's progress.

This document outlines our planned approach and details how we will use the latest communications practices to deliver results for the public and residents in the coming years.

The Communications team has played a critical role in a number of recent Council achievements, including:

- Delivery and promotion of events which put the Council and area on a world stage, attracting additional visitors and spend to West Dunbartonshire.
- Directing local organisations to financial support available to ensure resilience for residents through the Cost of Living Fund and other Council sources of funding.
- Supporting the digital first approach through promotion of self-serve and artificial intelligence reporting options.
- Ensuring residents and employees fully understand financial challenges faced by the Council through the creation of a multi-faceted budget campaign which targeted a range of different audiences and stakeholders.
- Promoting two elections in the area, including encouraging registration to vote and raising awareness of requirements for Voter ID.
- Supporting regeneration projects including through Levelling Up and City Deal.

COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

The team is highly skilled and experienced, and utilise a range of different communications practices including:

Social Media & Online We continue to grow our social media channels with Facebook being our key method of communicating quickly with a large audience. Our platforms provide an opportunity to share Council messages, respond to communities and engage with residents to gain vital feedback. We also communicate via the Council website.

Public Relations Our comprehensive reactive service liaises with officers from all areas of the Council to protect the organisation from unfair criticism with clear and timely media responses.

Strategic Communications Using expertise and insight, the team provide advice and guidance, supporting the development and implementation of comprehensive communications strategies to support and realise strategic priorities and minimise any risk to the Council's reputation.

Traditional/Print Media We maximise coverage of achievements which demonstrate the Council's success and while we are digital first in line with the Council's digital transformation agenda, traditional media continues to hold value in reaching groups which are not digitally connected.

Photography/Videography We continue to support all services with photography for media releases and other corporate projects. In addition, videography is undertaken where resources allow.

Commercial Activity We continue to build on our reputation and brand to increase local, regional and national recognition and encourage potential business opportunities and partnerships. We will embrace opportunities to support commercial activity to generate income to reinvest in West Dunbartonshire, including through sponsorship of Council events and advertising on Council assets.

Internal Communications West Dunbartonshire Council is the largest employer in the area, and we recognise that a well-informed workforce is fundamental. By engaging via platforms including the employee intranet and supporting leaders to communicate well with teams, we ensure our workforce is involved in the Council's vision and values and deliver services most effectively.

CORE STANDARDS

All communications issued by the Council are underpinned by a range of supporting policies, which include the [Brand Guidelines](#), [Media Protocol](#) and Communicating Effectively guidance.

The Council's target audience is wide. We work to ensure key communications reach a number of different groups, including residents, businesses, visitors, our own workforce, elected members, and partner organisations.

While communication style can be adapted to suit specific audiences, our approach to communicating is consistent.

Editorial control over Council communications sits with the Communications Team to ensure we are:

Clear: Using simple, jargon-free language so audiences can understand the work of the Council.

Accurate: Building trust with our audiences by providing communication which is factually correct and challenging falsehoods.

Timely: Aiming to be the first to tell our audiences about changes which might affect them, before they are reported elsewhere.

Accessible and Inclusive: Using a range of different channels and approaches to ensure different groups of people can access our communication.

Two-Way: Providing audiences with an opportunity to enter into a conversation with us and respond to their queries.

EQUALITIES

We recognise that West Dunbartonshire has a diverse community. Equalities is a key consideration in all Council activity, and work to ensure inclusion is a key part of service planning for the Communications team. All communications are developed in line with Communicating Effectively guidance, and this shapes how we share messaging, what channels and networks are used and how we listen to feedback.

Across all of its work, the Council will abide by its commitments and duty to have due regard to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations between different groups by building understanding and tackling prejudice as required by the Equality Act 2010.

SUPPORTING PRIORITIES

Communication is a critical tool which plays a vital role in supporting the Council to achieve its policy goals and priorities, as well as affecting positive change for communities.

The aims of our communications are in line with the four key priorities set out in the Council's [Strategic Plan](#).

- Our Community – Resilient and Thriving
- Our Environment – A Greener Future
- Our Economy – Strong and Flourishing
- Our Council – Inclusive and Adaptable

The next section outlines how the Communications Team can support the Council to drive forward towards these priorities.

Priority 1: Our Communities - Resilient and Thriving



Strategic Communication Objective:

To empower residents by ensuring they know about the Council supports available to them and how and when to access them. Continued focus on this will improve community wellbeing and ensure citizens have the knowledge they need to stay informed and motivated.

Case Study: Cost of Living Initiatives

Communication practices: Print media, online media, internal communication, social media

Audience: Residents, employees, community organisations

Measures of success: The Council introduced a Cost of Living fund to support residents hardest hit by increasing costs. Communication played a key role in getting information about the different ways the fund could be accessed. We have successfully supported the launch of the £100,000 Youth Success Fund which was fully utilised by 14 local organisations; the £1m Cost of Living Capital Fund; free family fun days, a Spring Clean Up and initiatives to offer free gym and swim access for young people. Feedback and outcomes from residents and community groups continues to be extremely positive throughout what has been a challenging financial period for both communities and the Council.

Priority 2: Our Environment – A Greener Future



Strategic Communication Objective:

To support citizens and employees with information which enables them to make positive choices to ensure a greener future for West Dunbartonshire, as well as demonstrating the focus our Council has on reducing carbon emissions both at an organisational level and for the area as a whole.

Case Study: Introducing Garden Waste permits

Communication practices: Print media, online media, internal communication, social media

Audience: Residents, employees, businesses, tenants

Measures of success: A multi-faceted communications plan created to minimise reputational risk when introducing new garden waste permits in the area. Information was made available quickly to answer residents' questions via a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions section on the Council website. Continued promotion was undertaken ahead of and during the application period via print media and social media as well as bin tags used to raise awareness of the scheme and an option to switch to composting. More than 8000 residents signed up for a permit, and a further 200 requested a compost bin and assistance with making the change to a greener way of disposing of their waste.

Priority 3: Our Economy – Strong and Flourishing



Strategic Communication Objective:

Attracting increased investment in West Dunbartonshire by promoting the area as open for business and demonstrating the success of existing regeneration projects, development opportunities and a thriving business landscape, with a skilled workforce.

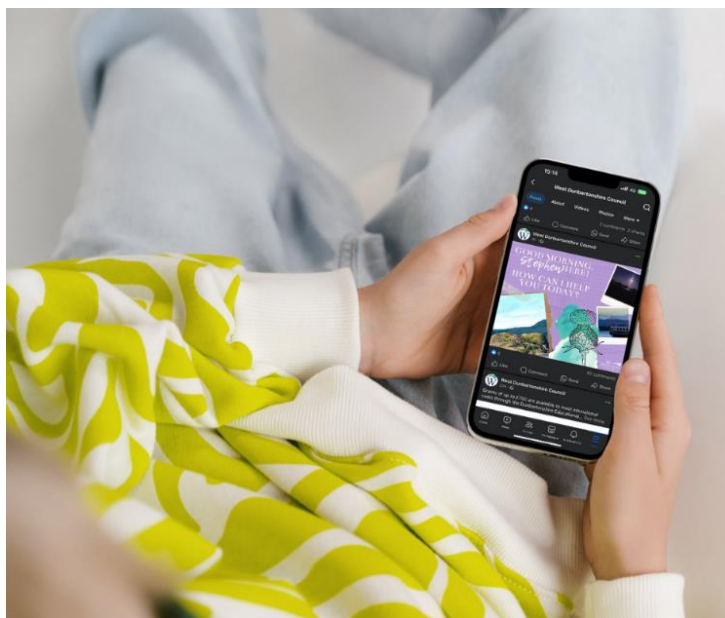
Case Study: Launching West Dunbartonshire Energy

Communication practices: Print media, online media, internal communication, social media

Audience: Residents, employees, businesses, tenants

Measures of success: Communications were key to the launch of West Dunbartonshire Energy Centre as we were able to clearly demonstrate the area's regeneration and development opportunities, with media coverage at a national (BBC, STV, The Herald, Scotsman, Daily Record) and international level (New York Times, Ouest France, Daily News Taiwan, CNA TV, Singapore). The project has also featured in marketing materials created to highlight the Greater Glasgow area's opportunities, gained interest from other local authorities, the Danish parliament and visits from Scotland's First Minister and Cabinet Secretary, placing the project and West Dunbartonshire at the forefront of the future of energy and innovation.

Priority 4: Our Council – Inclusive and Adaptable



Strategic Communication Objective

To adapt to emerging and changing need. Using communication devices, ensure all our audiences – including our workforce – can access services and support in a variety of different ways, including encouraging approaches which help reduce pressures on the Council. This will ensure everyone in the community feels informed and involved.

Case Study: Digital First

Communication practices:

Internal communication, social media, website

Audience:

Residents, employees, businesses, tenants

Measures of success: The demand for services continues to increase, and the Council is always considering additional methods of contact to ensure responsiveness to community need. The Communications team has been instrumental in promoting the digital first messaging, which has supported alternative avenues of contacting the council including social media, chat bots and online forms for those who are digitally able. This has reduced simple telephone and in-person enquiries, reducing pressure on the teams and saving the Council money by directing residents to 'self-serve' where possible.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Communications is a fast-moving sector, and with an ever-changing landscape due to technological advances, changes to the way our audiences consume and access information as well as the financial challenges faced by local authorities, the team must be adaptable to ensure continued success.

A range of quantitative and qualitative data will be used to consider the progress of this strategy, and ensure our communications are effective and supporting the Council to drive forward its strategic priorities.

This will include data gathered from performance targets; feedback gathered directly from residents and Council workforce both informally as well as through citizen engagement; insight from and benchmarking with peers in other local authorities; and continued research into the communications sector and emerging trends and technologies.

This strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and the team continues to keep pace with change in all forms to ensure a well-informed West Dunbartonshire.

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format on request.

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.



British Sign Language users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](mailto:contactSCOTLAND@BSL), the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service on 01389737198

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Gaelic

Tha an sgrìobhainn seo cuideachd ri fhaighinn ann an cànanan eile, ann an clò mòr, agus ann an cruth claisneachd ma thèid iarraidh

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Ukrainian

Цей документ також доступний іншими мовами, великим шрифтом та в аудіоформаті за запитом.

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔



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