



COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Introduction

Effective communications provide residents, partners and stakeholders with clear messages to enable access to Godalming Town Council services; raise understanding of the Council's vision as well as the benefits of the Council's services for the local communities.

Aim

Godalming Town Council has identified a need to utilise a communications culture that recognises the growing importance of digital channels, such as social media, by residents, partners and stakeholders who are seeking to find, as well as share news and information. This strategy sets a framework to guide Godalming Town Council's communications and marketing activities to ensure they support the future aims of the Council's as set out in its *Supporting Our Community Document* adopted on 19 July 2018 <http://godalming-tc.gov.uk/supporting-our-community>

Objectives of the Strategy

- To ensure Godalming Town Council's services, priorities, aims, objectives and challenges are communicated openly and effectively to the local community;
- To identify cost effective methods and systems to communicate with residents, partners and stakeholders;
- To promote a positive image within the community;
- To manage any negative impact of service failure;
- Measure effectiveness of communications activities.

Communication Principles – Godalming Town Council will:

- Communicate as one organisation;
- Communicate in plain English;
- Ensure communications are transparent, timely and focused on issues that matter to residents, partners and stakeholders;
- Ensure communications are widely accessible;
- Listen to and engage with the community.

Communication Audience

- Godalming residents;
- Government bodies and non-governmental bodies;
- Local business community;

- Local community and voluntary groups and organisations;
- Other local authorities and parish councils;
- Social media audiences;
- The media (national, regional, local and trade (as appropriate));
- Users of Godalming Town Council services;
- Visitors/tourists to Godalming.

Communications Channels

Godalming Town Council will use the following communication channels:

- Agendas, Minutes and Reports;
- Annual Report;
- Email correspondence;
- GTC Website;
- GTC newsletters;
- JBC Website;
- Mail correspondence when appropriate;
- Media releases;
- Media broadcast - local/regional/online;
- Office reception service;
- Outdoor marketing – banners, noticeboards;
- Partner websites and social media pages;
- Printed materials, leaflets, posters, flyers and brochures;
- Public events, displays, roadshows, consultations;
- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram;
- Statutory public notices.

Communications Themes

Godalming Town Council will utilise communication channels for:

- Public relations and media engagement
 - Proactively inform the public about Godalming Town Council, its aims and objectives, plans and services;
 - Develop and maintain effective media relations, locally, regionally and nationally to raise the profile of Godalming Town Council;
 - Manage the reputation of Godalming Town Council turning reactive activity into proactive activity wherever possible.
- Digital Communications
 - Identify opportunities to benefit Godalming Town Council and the communities it serves;
 - Promote the work of Godalming Town Council and its services;
 - To listen and engage with residents;
 - Increase online accessibility to council services.
- Marketing Activities
 - Raise the profile of Godalming, nationally and locally, as a great place to live, work, visit and invest in;
 - Deliver cost effective information campaigns;
 - Provide marketing activity for events and activities that supports the work of the Council;
 - Enhance recognition of Godalming Town Council's brand identity;
 - Ensure consistency of the Council's identity by officers, partners and external suppliers to ensure easier and quicker public recognition of GTC's services.

- Publications
 - Develop and improve council produced publications that support the Council's communications activities e.g. Supporting Our Community;
 - Utilise publications that offer value for money and are timely for residents and other target audiences;
 - Review the effectiveness and relevance of corporate publications to GTC's target audience.

Benchmarking Measures of Success

The following activities will be benchmarked for measurements of success

- Public relations and media engagement
 - Monitor proactive and reactive media releases (*see press strategy);
 - Monitor social media engagement growth (reach/number of views);
 - Monitor GTC website engagement;
 - Monitor JBC website engagement;
 - Feedback surveys form the community.
- Digital Communications
 - Monitor number of visitors to
 - www.godalming-tc.gov.uk
 - <http://godalming-tc.gov.uk/godalming-joint-burial-committee/>
 - Monitor and evaluate social media engagement growth (reach/number of views) for GTC social media/online platforms.
- Marketing Activities
 - Use of consistent and professional branding across the Council for all communications and marketing material;
 - Monitor feedback and customer satisfaction on marketing and events campaigns via social media channels.
- Publications
 - Distribution/readership statistics;
 - Monitor feedback created by published articles.

Half-yearly benchmark reports to be submitted to the Policy & Management Committee

Supporting Policies and Guidance Documents

- Acceptable Use of Social Media
- Acceptable Use of IT Facilities
- Press Strategy
- Supporting Our Community Publication
- Freedom of Information - Publication Scheme
- GDPR – Privacy Notice