

Communications and Engagement Plan



Community Governance Review (2018/19)

January 2019

Client: Kath O'Dwyer	Service / Team: Democratic Services		
Location: Westfields	Contact Details: 86607		
Approvers:			
Name	Role / notes		
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Dan Dickinson (DD)	Acting Director Legal Services		
Kath O'Dwyer (KOD)	Acting Chief Executive/Returning Officer		
Cllr Andrew Martin	Chairman of CGR Sub-Committee and Constitution Committee		
Comms Plan personnel:			
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Background:

Cheshire East Council (CEC) is conducting a review of town and parish council governance arrangements across Cheshire East after the all-out elections in May 2019.

Cheshire East has 186 town and parish council wards in 135 town and parish councils covering the whole borough. CEC is responsible for electoral and governance arrangements within the borough including:

- Town and parish boundaries
- Numbers of town and parish councillors
- Arrangements for wards and the meetings of groups of parish councils

It is good practice to review community governance every 10-15 years. CEC was created in 2009 and has yet to hold a full review of town and parish council governance.

CEC is aware of a small number of parish council governance-related issues, together with other matters which have arisen, for example, in connection with recent and proposed developments. The review will deal with these in borough-wide, coordinated way, so as to ensure consistency of approach – and prevent the risks associated with having a piecemeal, uncoordinated, reactive approach, which would challenge resources and timescales of delivery.

CEC will consult on the scope of the review, topics and proposals that can be included. CEC will then consult on proposals. The council hopes to conclude the review well before the May 2023 local elections.

Budget

There is no dedicated communications budget. The resources and staff time of the corporate media and communications team will be utilised as appropriate.

£0.

Communications objectives / outcomes:

Aim: To inform the general public and specific stakeholders about the CGR process and key milestones and timeline.

Aim: To build understanding about the CGR process and of the important messages that nothing is changing 'for now' and that any proposed changes will be fully consulted upon and views/comments taken into consideration.

Aim: To promote the perception of CEC as a 'responsible, efficient and effective organisation'.

Aim: To promote and increase partnership working within the borough.

Stakeholders / audiences:

List all decision makers, influencers, affected staff, affected service users, interested parties – please include other relevant information e.g. current position in relation to the issues and where we want to move them to.

Stakeholder	Notes
Residents/general public	
Media	
Cheshire East Council (CEC) members	
Cheshire East Council staff	
Town and parish clerks/councils in the borough	
Local MPs	
Community groups	
Other stakeholders	

Risks / opportunities:

List all risks and opportunities, specifying which stakeholders, objectives or actions they may affect.

RISK: Failure to follow best practice and carry out CGR within a reasonable period

RISK: Failure to complete CGR and adopt any recommendations before planned 2023 elections

RISK: Lack of clarity on messaging could raise a perception/concerns among residents and elected members around 'Gerrymandering' of council and/or parliamentary seats

RISK: Breach of 'purdah' rules around council communications between 14 March (purdah starts) and 10pm on 2 May 2019 (Election Day)

RISK: Failure to be seen to be co-operating with partner councils and other key stakeholders

RISK: Perceived failure to adequately consult with residents and other stakeholders – leading to judicial review

OPPORTUNITY: Reassert the strength of, and commitment to, partnership working

OPPORTUNITY: To show that Cheshire East Council is a 'responsible, efficient and effective organisation'

OPPORTUNITY: To show that Cheshire East Council is forward thinking and 'ahead of the game'

Approach / Strategy:

Messaging and engagement must be:

- Clearly articulated
- Factual and politically neutral/non-partisan
- Not breach 'purdah rules' during the pre-election period – nor be perceived in any way as not impartial
- Link to, and be consistent with, previous factual narratives around community governance
- Focussed on outcomes around engagement with town and parish councils and local residents
- Clearly branded as Cheshire East that builds consistency around Comms and engagement activity.

We aim to

1. Inform residents and stakeholders and build interest around CGR:
 - a. The need to ensure people's views are heard and any concerns addressed
 - b. To encourage active involvement in shaping the review 'issues' and taking part on the consultation on proposals made
 - c. To ensure residents/wider stakeholders are aware of engagement exhibitions/workshops and deadlines for taking part

We will do this by:

- Creating/applying a confident and consistent factual tone of communications
- Media releases at key moments in the CGR process
- Social media posts re-purposing content from media releases and other resources
- The use of strong visual images/video to accompany media content
- Build specific interest via original social media activity (following the principles of engaging social media as described in CEC's Social Media Vision) - including:
 - Visualisation / infographics / videos
 - Informing process interaction
 - Did you know...?
- Signposting residents and specific stakeholders to media release content/repurposed content.
- Internal staff communications (Team Voice)
- Being prepared with confident, evidence-based statements/responses to media/stakeholder inquiries.

Key messages:

- *Nothing is changing now*
- *CEC is holding a borough-wide review in respect of the governance arrangements of all the borough's town and parish councils*
- *It is NOT a review of Cheshire East Council's own borough ward boundaries or electoral arrangements – these are the responsibility of the Boundary Commission for England in Whitehall*
- *Holding a review of community governance is normal and good practice*
- *We won't make changes for 'change's sake'*
- *Any changes proposed will be fully consulted on by residents and other key stakeholders*
- *We will consult (on remit/areas to be reviewed) – and consult again (on any changes proposed)*
- *'Holistic' borough-wide planned review is better than a piecemeal reactive approach and more cost effective*
- *Cheshire East Council is acting now – to be 'ahead of the game'*
- *An expert adviser on CGR has praised CEC for being so well organised, sensible, thorough and prompt in its approach*

Action Plan / Tasks *(Can be in the table provided or a separate spreadsheet)*

ACTIVITY	CHANNEL(S)	AUDIENCE(S)	CASH COST	NON-CASH RESOURCES	DATE /TIMESCALE	AIMS / MESSAGES	RISKS / NOTES	ACTION – WHO	COMPLETE
Website pages created for CGR content	CEC website	Residents town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	January 2019	Inform residents and key stakeholders. Share key messages about CGR, the purpose and process etc		NH	Draft written
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	05/02/2019	Launch of campaign to inform residents and share key messages about CGR, the purpose and process etc		TO	Completed – media release issued
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	From 05/02/2019 onwards	Launch of 'raise awareness' drive, encourage involvement and build engagement Share key messages		RH	Completed - ongoing
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	28/05/2019 to flag up start of 7-week survey on 03/06/2019 (Runs until 19/07/2019)	Pre-consultation survey of key stakeholders (town and parish councils). 7 weeks. Reinforce key messages about CGR process		TO	

Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	28/05/2019 And then from 03/06/2019 onwards	Raise awareness, encourage involvement and build engagement Share key messages		RH	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	10/12/2019	Launch of 15-week formal consultation on proposals. Inform residents and stakeholders and reinforce key messages		TO	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	10/12/2019 onwards	Raise awareness, encourage involvement and build engagement Share key messages		RH	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	02/03/2020 And/or 09/03/2020	Only two/one weeks to go until close of formal consultation period on proposals. Inform residents and stakeholders and reinforce key messages		TO	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	02/03/2020 And/or 09/03/2020	Raise awareness, encourage involvement and build engagement Share key messages		RH	

Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	19/03/2020	Thank residents and wider stakeholders for their comments /submissions via consultation. Deploy any positive relevant figures (how many councils took part, total number of representations etc) Inform residents and stakeholders and reinforce key messages		TO	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	19/03/2020	Raise awareness, build engagement. Share key messages		RH	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	June 2020 & following as required	Formal approvals of proposals for CGR Reinforce key messages		TO	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	June 2020 & following as required	Raise awareness, build engagement. Share key messages		RH	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	28/09/2020	Constitution Committee approval/decision re CGR proposals Reinforce key messages		TO	

Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	£0	Staff time	28/09/2020	Raise awareness, Share key messages		RH	
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Add additional rows as required

Project Evaluation Report

Summary of spend		
Item	Supplier	Cost
		£
		£
		£
		£
		<i>Add additional rows as required</i>
Total Spend		£

Activity metrics			
Media	Number		
Releases			
Statements			
Queries			
Monitored mentions	Positive:	Neutral:	Negative:
Digital and social content / conversations			
Publications			
Events / Direct engagement opportunities			

Performance against Communications Objectives				
Communications Objective	Measure(s)	Target	Actual	Link to Corporate Priority
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>				