

Crewe Town Board communications and engagement strategy

Background

Crewe has been selected as one of 101 towns to put forward a bid for up to £25m of funding from the government's Towns Fund, which will be available to spend up to 2026 and support the town's long-term economic growth.

A Town Board for Crewe has been set up to oversee the development of a bid for this funding opportunity. The board is made up of cross-sectoral community representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors which aims, through community engagement, to develop a vision and strategy that will shape the transformation of Crewe over the coming years.

They also help to oversee the delivery of other projects already in the pipeline, including the town centre's regeneration and Crewe hub station, to ensure all are aligned to the same vision.

If successful in its bid, Crewe will be able to deliver a variety of capital projects to boost the town's long-term regeneration.

Crewe Town Board has been reaching out to communities and leaders across the town to gather project proposals for the bid. A final list of projects will be agreed by the board from a long-list. These will feed into Crewe's 10-year Town Investment Plan, ready for the final submission of Crewe's bid in January 2021.

The board is required to be open and transparent in its actions and decisions

The towns fund guidance states: *'it is important to be clear how Town Deal Boards align with other place-based initiatives in towns and provide evidence of a shared vision and commitment from a range of stakeholders...'*

Part one of the Town Investment Plan template includes stages of strategy – Creating a vision, and Engagement and Delivery. Each of these have some implications in terms of Communications.

- **Involve:** Identify and involve the people/organisations who have an interest in the proposals and developments
- **Support:** Identify and show how you will overcome any barriers to involvement
- **Evidence:** Gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
- **Design:** Agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose, and demonstrate engagement throughout the project lifetime/Town Deal Fund
- **Work together:** Agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

- Share information: Ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants and everyone is looped into the information needed to make informed decisions
- Work with others: Work effectively with others who are already or could help with engagement for example the voluntary and community sector, social enterprises or relevant public sector bodies
- Improve: You may need to consider further developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants
- Feedback: How will you feed back the results of engagement to the wider community and agencies affected, and show the impact this engagement has had
- Evaluate engagement: Monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and adjust as necessary

To support the work of the board and development of the TIP, a communications and engagement sub group has been formed.

Strategic communications and engagement objectives

Overarching vision

The vision is for all members of Crewe Town Board to talk in one unified voice that aligns to the board's vision, aspirations and goals and wider Crewe narrative.

Strategic objectives:

- Build a positive reputation for the town - all communications seek to address the negative attitude that 'it will never happen' through an authentic voice and regular publication of positive content, which showcases Crewe's present and future transformation and highlights upcoming actions taking place around the town's regeneration;
- One unified voice - through communications, all partners will showcase the vision and positive direction the town is moving in, developing **trust and hope** in the messaging;
- Deliver the evidence of the communication and engagement taking place to develop the TIP to satisfy Government requirements and showcase the journey being undertaken to local communities;

Communications approach

While Cheshire East Council is the accountable body for Crewe Town Board, the board itself is made up of cross-sectoral community representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors and as such is reflective of the 'partnership' working that is underpinning the regeneration of Crewe.

The Crewe Town Board communications and engagement sub group is also reflective of this and as such is not 'led' by one specific person or organisation.

In order to achieve our strategic objectives:

- A clear set of procedures and protocols for issuing communications – as well as the channels via which they will be issued - will be developed and agreed upon by the sub group and board;
- An agreed set of key messages with an authentic voice will underpin all communications and engagement activity and will be reviewed as the project evolves;
- The key project milestones will be identified and a programme of regular communications on agreed subjects will be established (and developed as the project progresses to maximise opportunities) – enabling all board members to see what activity is planned and the positive messaging that is to be used;
- The sub group will support the board to maintain relationships with key stakeholders and identify opportunities to do this;
- Communications will seek to showcase how the board has involved the communities of Crewe in developing the TIP, with the aim of highlighting this 'people centred approach';
- All communications activity – whether delivered as a group or individually – will consider the wider 'Crewe story' and potential reputational risks;

Communications and engagement action plan

Initial priorities of the communication and engagement sub group			
What	How	Who	By when
Identify and map out the communication and engagement channels already held by Crewe Town Board as a whole – including active social media accounts, websites/webpages, stakeholder relationships and media contacts	All comms sub group members to feedback to Rhiannon Hilton (RH) with the suggested channels that can be utilised	All comms sub group members	As of 04/01/2021-ongoing
Agree a core set of channels to be utilised by the board	RH to collate suggested channels and a final set agreed by the sub group	RH Comms sub group	As of 04/01/2021 - ongoing
Draft and agree a boiler plate to be used where necessary in communications	RH to draft and sub group to agree before sending to	RH/sub group/chair	COMPLETED

	chair for final approval		
Draft and agree a set of key messages to be used in communication and engagement activity	RH to write first draft and sub group to agree before sending to chair for final approval	RH/sub group/chair	As of 04/01/2021 – initial draft for input
Identify the key project milestones and establish a clear timeline of communication activity that supports the work of Crewe Town Board and the development of a TIP, as well as the submission of the eventual bid.	Sub group to feed in to a centrally held document and agreed by group as whole before being approved by chair	Sub group/chair	30/11/20
Draft the first press release – subject TBC	RH to draft with group input	RH/sub group/chair – all subject to organisational sign off procedures too	COMPLETED
Awareness and development of cascade plans to communicate with key stakeholders	Group input and RH to collate	RH/sub group	
Agree policies and procedures for communications and engagement activity	Group input, led by RH	RH/sub group/board	As of 04/01/2021 - ongoing
Longer term priorities			
Support the delivery of a Crewe Town Board website and the creation of content to populate it	Sub group		As of 04/01/2021 - ongoing

Roles and responsibilities

Crewe Town Board chair – final sign off for all communications and engagement activity

Crewe Town Board communications and engagement sub group – Agree and implement the communications and engagement approach and work together to draft and issue the subsequent activity/communications products

Cheshire East Council communications (Rhiannon Hilton) – Can advise on the strategic communications and engagement approach and draft core communications material on behalf of the board, with input from sub group members

Branding – Crewe Town Council can be consulted for queries about using the brand and its assets

Procedures and protocols

- All requests for interview/comment by the media regarding the board and TIP should be directed to Rhiannon Hilton and the comms sub group in the first instance. **No interview should be carried out before doing this.** A decision will then be made by the group on who will lead and respond to that enquiry. The response should receive final sign off by the chair and then be issued by the appropriate organisation.
- A full briefing can be provided by Rhiannon Hilton/comms sub group for those giving interviews/comment.
- All communications activity regarding the board and TIP will be discussed and agreed upon by the sub group in the first instance. The final decision will be made by the board's chair. **Communications should not be issued without the sub group and chair's prior approval;**
- At the first opportunity, board members should raise potential reputations issues that could impact on the work of the board or wider regeneration of Crewe with Rhiannon Hilton/sub group so that positive action can be taken;
- Key opportunities for positive communications and engagement activity will be identified by the board and comms sub group as the project progresses and incorporated into the timeline of planned activity;
- The general approval process for media releases is as follows:
 1. **First draft sent to comms sub group for comments and their subsequent approval**
 2. **Sent to Cheshire East Council for internal sign off, including from Cabinet member for environment and regeneration**
 3. **Sent to board chair for final sign off**
 4. **Final draft shared with all board members shortly before being issued to the media.**

In the short term:

- All media releases issued by the board will be focused on the work to develop the TIP and will be agreed by the sub group.
- Press releases solely regarding the board and TIP will be issued by Cheshire East Council's communications team (Rhiannon Hilton) with a note to the media that it is issued on behalf of the board.
- Press releases that discuss the wider Crewe narrative but reference the board should instead incorporate the agreed boiler plate and be issued by the lead

organisation (these are still subject to the comms sub group's input and sign off by the chair);

- Any quotes included in press releases are subject to the related organisation's own approval processes and the time to achieve this should be factored into the planning process for communications activity;

Longer term

- Media relations including press releases and enquiries once the TIP has been submitted will be divided up based on project leads. The comms sub group will also allocate resources based on the projects.

Key messages

- Crewe is one of 101 towns selected to put forward a bid for funding from the government's Towns Fund, which will be available to spend up to 2026.
- If successful, Crewe will be able to deliver a variety of capital projects to boost the town's long-term economic growth and development.
- Priorities will include regeneration, planning and land-use; arts, culture and heritage; local transport; digital connectivity and skills and enterprise infrastructure.
- This is the chance for the people of Crewe to help shape their town's future. Through discussions with the community, Crewe Town Board is developing a vision and strategy that will shape the transformation of Crewe over the next 10 to 15 years. We need to transform Crewe and we need to do it now – together.
- Crewe is a town that is very much growing and so much has already been achieved. But we now have an unprecedented opportunity to carve out a new chapter in Crewe's history and help to ensure the town reaches its full potential.
- This is a huge opportunity to raise the standards of living of people working and living in Crewe.
- Securing this funding for Crewe would enable us to put in place a long-term strategy, with a unifying vision for the town's future that is based on the needs and wants of Crewe people.

Need to develop key themes based on shortlist of projects:

- Regeneration, planning and land-use;
- Arts, Culture and Heritage;
- Local Transport;
- Digital Connectivity;
- Skills and enterprise infrastructure.

Communications and engagement timeline (to be agreed by sub group and chair)

W/c 30/11/2020 – Communication subject: Profile some of the board members, details of the engagement that has taken place and reference next steps for the bid.

Jan TBC – Profile shortlisted projects

Jan TBC – website launch

TBC Jan – bid has been submitted, details of the next steps and manage expectations

Communication channels

Cheshire East Council:

- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube
- Website – www.cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Media contacts – local, regional and national
- Internal – staff newsletter, Centranet
- Stakeholders – all Cheshire East member briefing, community networks and officer relationships e.g. business to business contact

South Cheshire Chamber:

- Monthly magazine and newsletter

Lyceum Theatre:

- Access to patron database where permissions exist to forward surveys / news updates as part of a regular newsletter
- Website www.crewelyceum.co.uk
- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Circulate surveys / updates via newsletters to closed staff and volunteer database
- Canvass opinions and feedback from our network of professional theatre-makers and producers, dance-troupes, amateur/community theatre groups, learning and engagement partners
- Once it re-opens, the Lyceum can be used as a base for community briefings / engagement sessions / consultation meetings for members of public and B2B

Crewe Cultural Forum:

- Access to database of freelancers, organisations and stakeholders all involved in or with an interest in supporting the cultural and heritage sectors
- Access to creative community engagement sessions, consultation meetings and focus groups to support the regeneration framework

Cheshire College South and West:

Audience - students

Crewe Town Council:

- CTC website
- Facebook
- In Crewe Facebook page
- An established community network
- Email to town centre businesses.

Branding

Communications should be mindful of the place brand – and therefore narrative - for Crewe to ensure consistent messaging, in addition to the ‘wider story’ for the town.

Evaluation / measures

Jane / David – what do we need to evidence?

Social media metrics – how many people are re reaching with our messages and how many of those are engaging with us? Individual organisations to feedback on stats.

Media releases – coverage

Responses to the survey

Number of people consulted on

Projects submitted

Qualitative Judgement on sense of perceptions in Crewe

Stakeholders – approached via consultation