



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2024-2026



Contents

Purpose	4
Internal Communication	
Introduction	6
Audiences	7
Our Objectives	7
The Staff Survey	7
Action Plan	8
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Internal Communications	9
External Communication & Community Engagement	
Introduction	10
Audiences	11
Our Objectives	11
Action Plan	11
Our Principles	15
Website and Social Media	15
Monitoring the Effectiveness of External Communications	15
Emergency/Crisis Communication	15
Burnley Place Brand Team	16

PURPOSE

To deliver effective communication and community engagement to ensure customers know what the Council and its key partners do and how they can readily access and shape local services.

It's crucial that we focus on listening to what residents have to say, rather than simply outlining what we plan to do.

To encourage two-way communication which ensures:

- our staff, customers, members and stakeholders are well informed about the work of the council so that they can influence, challenge and support this work.
- our customers have a positive experience of interacting with the council which will reduce avoidable contact and increase customer satisfaction.



INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

To continue to meet customer needs with significantly fewer resources it is essential that we have motivated, collaborative teams that are ambitious and enterprising for Burnley. With these teams delivering so many public services, it is essential that they have access to up-to-date information from across the council and from strategic partners, as well as an appreciation for the challenges facing local government.

Effective internal communication is a key factor in engaging and inspiring teams to overcome challenges and achieve the council's strategic objectives. It gives everyone the opportunity to share ideas for continuous improvement, to learn from each other and celebrate successes.

Internal communication should be a shared responsibility across all levels of the council, everyone ensuring that information flows freely and accurately. This collective effort helps to break down silos, encourages the sharing of ideas and best practices, and promotes a sense of ownership and accountability.

Audiences

All staff, councillors, volunteers, and strategic partners.

Our Objectives

1. To ensure staff at all levels feel informed and, in a position, to support the council's vision, strategic objectives and values.
2. To enable staff, councillors and strategic partners to advocate for the council.
3. To raise awareness of council services to promote collaborative working between teams.
4. To maintain a culture of two-way communication between staff, managers and councillors.
5. To recognise that different methods of communication are needed across the council.
6. To encouraging staff to share good practice and expertise.
7. To celebrate individual and organisational successes.

The Staff Survey

The June 2024 staff survey showed that there had been no change in the proportion of staff feeling that communication is good across the council. Four in five (82%) agree that communication within their team is good, up on the level two years ago. While it seems that staff generally get enough information on the issues that affect them and that it reaches them in a timely and regular basis, more than two in five (43%) disagree that they hear what is happening in other teams.

The action plan below details how we will continue to communicate internally using current methods and what new methods will be used to reach more staff and ensure communication across teams is improved.

Action Plan

Current Methods

What	Why	Where	Who
Sharepoint	Information sharing portal		
Review to determine whether widely used	To consider other platforms e.g. MS Engage	Ongoing	Heads of Service
Health & wellbeing news	To update staff with a wide variety of information that supports their health & wellbeing	Every 3 months	People and Development
Health & wellbeing meetings	To ensure all members of each unit are updated on health & wellbeing initiatives to feed back to their team members.	Every 5 to 6 weeks	People and Development
Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG)	To ensure the safety of larger Burnley events are communicated across the multiple and varied partners.	Bi-monthly	Strategic Health & Safety Advisor
Learning & Development News	To update staff with internal and external learning opportunities	Every month	People and Development
All officer emails	To avoid email overload, only use to deliver time sensitive, or particularly relevant information.	When required	Management Team, Communications
Chats with the Chief	Encourages two-way communication	Twice per year	Senior Secretary
Staff Conferences & Awards	Celebrate success. Update key corporate messages and projects	Twice per year	Policy & Engagement
Management Team Meetings	Governance - operations are effective and efficient.	Weekly	Management Team
Senior Management Group Meetings	Minutes are sent to SMG from each management team. Ensuring coordination and collaboration from management team and across all units.	Quarterly	Management Team
Staff Survey	To receive feedback from staff and action areas for improvement	Every two years	Policy & Engagement
Middle Managers Meetings	Central to operational delivery, supporting collaboration and connections across the organisation with two-way communication between middle and senior leaders. Consultation and problem solving.	Twice per year	Management Team

What	Why	Where	Who
Team meetings and Away Days	Team building, collaboration, problem solving, work planning, innovation, improved communication, wellbeing.	Varies	Individual service units
Focus Groups	To gain insights through small groups made up of people from across the organisation. Looking at complex topics, areas of required improvement or change management.	When required	Management Team

Current Methods Members

What	Why	When	Who
Member briefings	To train and inform	When new members start and when required	Democracy Each service unit
All members emails	To avoid email overload, only use to deliver time sensitive, or particularly relevant information.	When required	Democracy Policy and Engagement Management Team
Strategic Update Meetings	To update portfolio holders in relation to performance against strategic priorities. Two-way conversations with officers and Executive Members.	Every 6 weeks	Chief Executive Chief Operating Officer Heads of Service
Executive “Away Days” with management team	Strategic Planning	Twice per year	Management Team

Monitoring the Effectiveness of Internal Communications

1. The volume of unique open clicks for internal updates for staff and councillors
2. Results of the staff survey
3. Pulse surveys to check the effectiveness of internal communications.
4. The number of external award submissions per year and the success rate.
5. Number of attendees at staff conferences

A working group will be established to govern the actions and effectiveness of the strategy. This working group will be chaired by the Vice Chair of the council's Audit and Standards Committee.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Community engagement is about the customer being at the centre of their own local services. Supporting residents to strengthen their resilience and build upon capacity. Some service areas such as planning and licensing require statutory consultation periods with the public, in other areas the council voluntarily and actively seeks out the views of the community as national surveys show that the more informed residents are, the more satisfied they are with their council. Surveys also suggest that residents are more likely to engage with a council where it is clear that residents' views are taken into account and where they feel they can influence decisions, in line with those made by members.

There are different levels of community engagement which should be considered when determining methods of communication and publicity campaigns.

Audiences

Everyone; residents, businesses, councillors, MP, partner organisations, voluntary sector organisations, community groups.

Our Objectives

1. To increase public awareness of council services,
2. To build relationships and trust with local communities,
3. To promote community engagement and community cohesion,
4. To support proactive community leaders who support residents to strengthen their resilience and build upon capacity "helping communities help themselves"
5. To address specific issues or concerns within the borough, challenging negative perceptions about council services
6. To deliver communications through a range of media's that acknowledge Burnley's diverse audiences
7. To use innovative methods that enable us to reach communities whose voices are seldom heard
8. To communicate using plain language, at the right time, using the most effective channel, so that customers feel informed and supported when making applications, reports or bookings

Action Plan

The Policy and Engagement Team, have a rolling monthly work programme of communications, community engagement and marketing campaigns that are agreed with management team, service heads and Policy Board, linking directly to the council's strategic objectives. The work can be split into three priority areas which ensure the council's limited resources for communication and engagement activity are used as effectively as possible:

- **Priority 1** campaigns are those that will have the biggest impact on council reputation and communities, they are vital to the delivery of one or more of the strategic objectives.
- **Priority 2** campaigns are closely aligned to priorities but have a lesser impact on the reputation of the council
- **Priority 3** activity includes smaller campaigns - either aimed at smaller audiences or supporting time limited activity or events

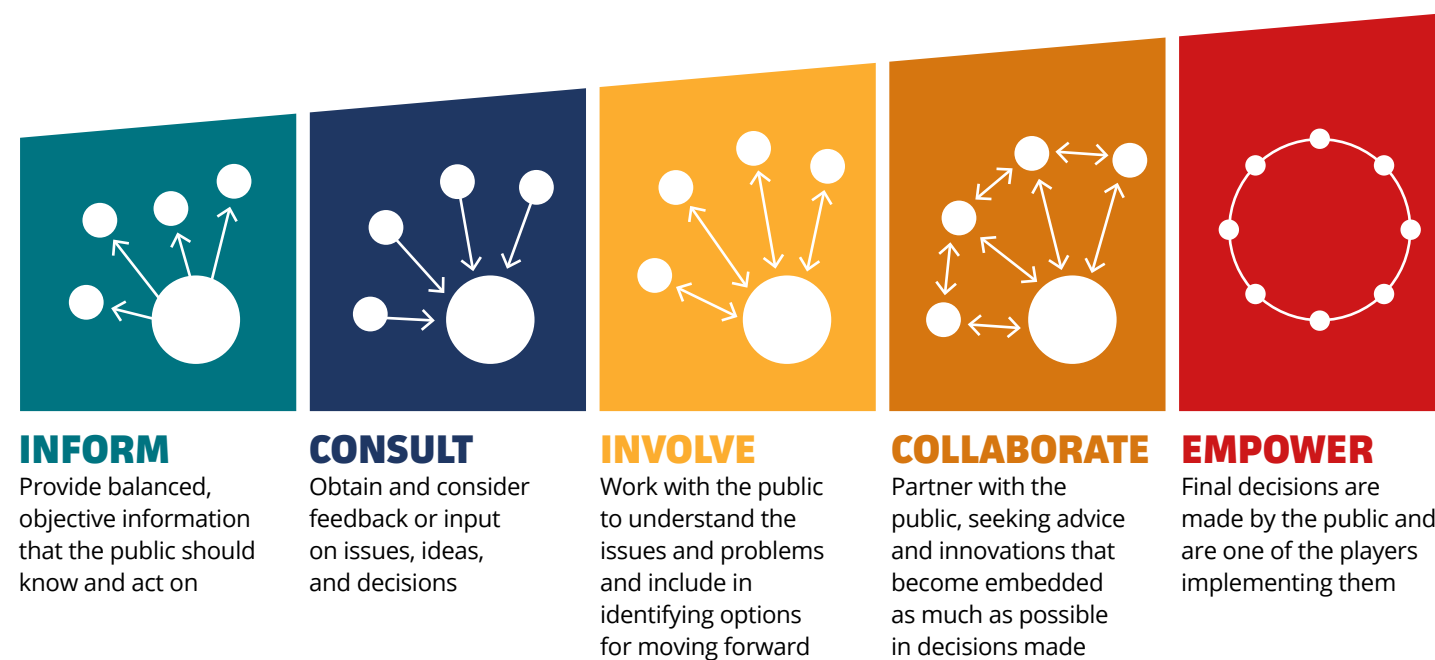


Figure 1. Community Engagement Continuum, developed by Harvard Catalyst. www.mapc.org

Current Methods

What	Why	When	Who
Liaison with the media and press releases	Promote good news stories	Statutory requirements Good news	Communications Manager
Letters, Leaflets, Emails and SMS	Distribution of key information that need to reach offline communities Going forward look at customer relations management in relation to the digital transformation strategy.	When required	Service Units
Leaders Surgery	To meet and listen to residents and address their concerns directly	Minium twice per year	Community Engagement Manager
Annual Council Tax Bill	Opportunity to include key information that will be distributed to every household	Annually in April	Liberata and Communications Manager Graphics
Annual Election Campaigns	To encourage voters and share key information	Annually Jan - May	Elections Team Communication Manager Graphics
Facebook posts	To keep the community informed and engaged with council activities/services A way for residents to contact the council through messenger	At least 5 posts per week	Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker Communication champions
Council website	To provide a central hub for information and services	Updates when required	Graphics Communication Manager Individual Service Units
Deliver the Above and Beyond Awards Burnley Business Awards	To celebrate community leaders, volunteers, community groups and successful initiatives. To celebrate local businesses.	Bi-yearly	Community Engagement Team Leader Communication Manager Graphics Economy and Growth
Resident satisfaction survey	To gather feedback on community needs, satisfaction with services, and areas for improvement. To benchmark with other local authorities.	Bi-yearly	Head of Policy and Engagement

Future Methods

What	Why	When	Who
Engage communities that are seldom heard. -Identify and map out such groups -Undertake outreach campaigns and events in locations frequented by the identified groups -Partner with community leaders, organisations, and influencers to build trust and relationships -Include residents moving to new housing estates	So that all Burnley residents feel empowered to contribute to the decision-making processes that shape their community	By Mar 25 and ongoing	Front Line Services Communications Manager Community Engagement Team Leader Civic and Community Engagement Officer
wRe-wrap council trailer to enable frequent roadshows with front line services	To increase visibility and accessibility of council services	By Jan 25	Graphics Communications Manager
Explore targeted print media The use of specific publications based on demographic and/or location depending upon the media campaign	The use of specific publications based on demographic and location depending upon the media campaign	When required	Communications Manager Community Engagement Team Leader
Explore outdoor media Use of digital screens (Turf Moor – Kierby) Telephone and bus stops Bin lorries and parks vehicles	To reach wider audiences depending upon the media campaign	When required	Digital Communicator and Art worker
Explore the use of independent local radio stations in our area. Short radio adverts relevant to localised audience and demographic depending upon the media campaign.	To enhance campaigns by targeting specific geographic areas and engaging a captive audience	When required	Communications Manager
Create short instructional videos/ guides for key council services	To increase residents understanding of the Council's services and how to use them.	When required	Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker
Support the community to deliver a range of community events that celebrate diversity and encourage engagement.	Support community cohesion and engagement	Annually for Bubbles in the park and as required for other events	Community Engagement Team Leader Civic and Community Engagement Officer
Increase the promotion of civic events and community engagement with the Mayor	Strengthen community relations, enhance civic pride, and encourage participation in events.	October 24	Digital Communicator and Art worker Civic and Community Engagement Officer

What	Why	When	Who
Increase community visits to the Town Hall. E.g. schools, clubs etc as well as visits to schools	To build stronger connections between the council and communities. To help children learn about local government and inspire them to take an interest in public service.	Start promotions Jan 25	Civic and Community Engagement Officer Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker Governance Manager Mayor's Officer Councillors
Build community capacity by supporting community settings to promote the clubs, social events they run. Provide appropriate training on the use of social media, building, maintaining websites.	To enhance community cohesion, to encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community. To help identify and address local needs, build more resilient communities.	October 24 – starting with the diversity events.	Digital Communicator and Art worker Graphics Community Engagement Team Leader
Establishing a strong presence on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn using schedule tools such as “Hoot Sweet or Sprout”. -Use other social media platforms such as TikTok or Snapchat depending upon the demographics of the communities we want to reach - Use targeted advertising and influencer marketing to expand audience reach -Establish a council whatsapp channel	To effectively reach and engage with different demographics and locations. To provide public information.	Start to increase reach Sept 24 then ongoing and as required.	Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker Communication Champions
Implement communication champions in each unit.	To encourage consistent and effective communication across all units. To encourage front line services to generate their own social media content.	Communication champions in place by Jan 25	Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker
Provide social media training to communication champions and members.	To enhance knowledge, skills and confidence in social media engagement.	Start Dec 24	Communications Manager Digital Communicator and Art worker

Our Principles

- All our communications will be lawful and adhere to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (March 2011)
- All communications will be sent in a timely manner and be factually accurate
- All communications will be accessible reflecting the diverse needs of our audiences
- All communications will be collaborative, using our strong partnerships to maximise reach and improve engagement

Website and Social Media

Digital communications channels, particularly the website, will play an increasingly important role in how the council communicates and engages with its target audiences. The website plays an integral role in meeting the objectives of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2024 to 2028.

We aim to create engaging and innovative content that raises awareness of council services as well as encouraging two-way communication. The council have a social media and non-corporate communication channels policy which sets out how social media should be used by the council. In addition, council posts should:

- Not include copyrighted material (such as photos, music, or articles) without permission or suitable attribution
- Have clear images and text that is compliant with web accessibility and in line with the council's corporate branding. Any new branding should be agreed with the Communications Manager/ Head of Policy and Engagement
- Only include photographs of people where permission has been given
- If video content is included ensure there is clear sound and footage with subtitles
- Video content should be engaging and the appropriate length for the media platform being used
- Be written in plain English, avoiding the use of abbreviations and acronyms
- Not overuse hashtags; the Government Digital Service (GDS) recommends using up to two
- State clearly and concisely what a link leads to and try to only use one link per post
- Add alternative text to images, videos and GIFs
- Tag relevant partners to increase engagement and awareness

Monitoring the Effectiveness of External Communications

Large scale priority 1 and 2 campaigns will have their own individual communications plans with an evaluation scheme devised as part of the initial workplan. Quarterly monitoring will be undertaken in relation to:

- Total social media engagement per quarter
- Press releases per quarter
- Number of burnley.gov. uk users per quarter
- Average organic reach over each quarter
- Social media unique posts per quarter
- The number of followers

Emergency/Crisis Communication

Communications in emergencies forms part of the council's Emergency Response Plan. This plan details the principles, resource allocation and strategic communications activity required to provide corporate communications during the response and recovery phases arising from an incident or civil emergency.

The Policy and Engagement Team are available to be contacted out of hours through this plan to deliver emergency communications and updating of social media and the website.

Burnley Place Brand Team

It is important to note that the council has a Burnley Place Brand Team who are specifically tasked with positively promoting Burnley as a place in which to work, invest, live, explore, play and study.

The Burnley Brand Team is tasked with promoting Burnley the place, rather than Burnley Council and its services. The Burnley Place Brand (burnley.co.uk) was established in 2009 to promote Burnley to investors, businesses, developers, visitors and potential residents addressing challenges of a declining population, low levels of investment and poor perceptions of the town. The Burnley Brand activities are part funded by the Council but also by subscriptions from circa 200 bondholders.

The Burnley Bondholders, a public-private partnership established to get the Council, key stakeholders and the business community to work together for the benefit of the town. Now comprising 200 members, it is a huge driving force for the place brand, with bondholders getting behind the council's vision and being ambassadors for the borough, often on a global stage. They have also played a key role in lobbying for resources and key infrastructure such as the Todmorden Curve.



The brand team work with stakeholders and businesses to generate positive stories about the Borough and curate a programme of engaging activities for our business community to showcase the town. The team manages the Burnley.co.uk website together with facebook and LinkedIn channels, as well as Burnleysocial which is aimed at a youth audience. They produce a twice-yearly Burnley Lifestyle and InBusiness Burnley Magazines. The team has also established Film in Burnley office, which was established to ensure Burnley was told in a new narrative on screen. When the team worked with Netflix in the production of Bank of Dave, production companies paid to shoot in places such as our parks, the money is then reinvested into the community for items such as new playground equipment.



All this work and more, since 2009, has culminated in the Burnley place brand, bondholders and the symbiotic public/private sector relationship being highly regarded amongst other local authorities. And, of course, promoting Burnley as a destination in which to do business, raise a family, have a quality education and visit.





Burnley
.gov.uk