



North Norfolk District Council Communications Delivery Plan 2021

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Why we are here:

- Enhance and protect the reputation of North Norfolk District Council
- Maximise the Council's ability to communicate effectively with the people of North Norfolk
- Promote and support the key objectives and achievements of the Council
- Maintain good professional working relationships with all key external media stakeholders
- Support officers and members in all Comms-related work
- Assist with communication of key corporate news to officers and members

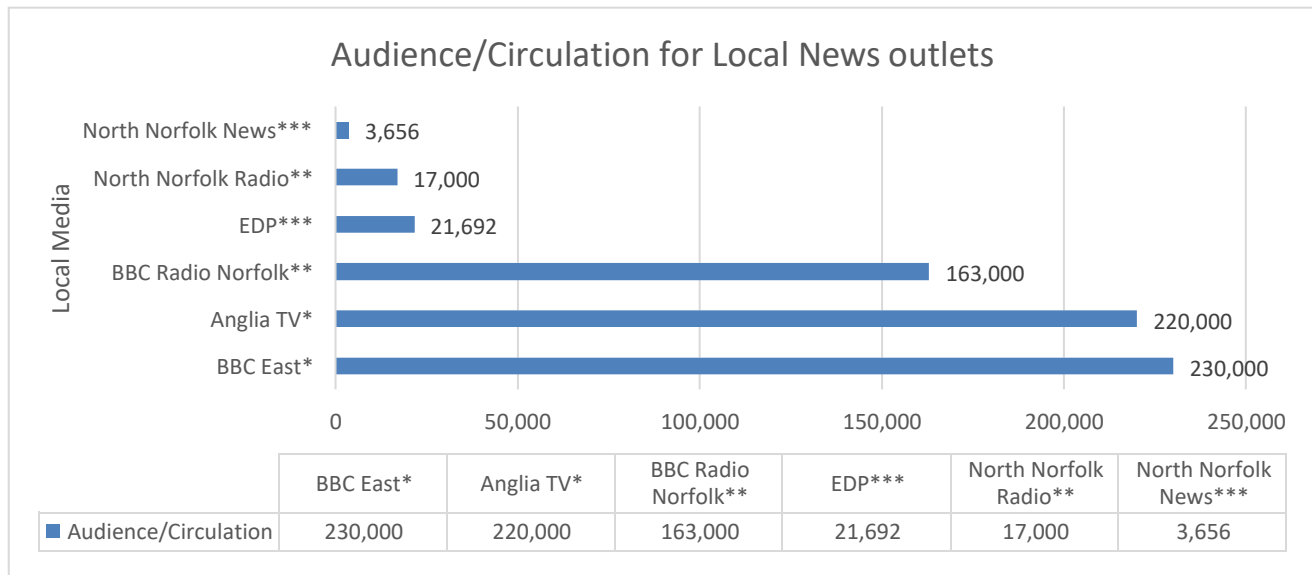
Key strategic objectives for next 12 months:

- 1) Build audience on NNDC-owned channels
- 2) Re-launch/reinvigorate Corporate Plan, its objectives and our delivery against those objectives
- 3) Establish appropriate balance between external and internal Comms
- 4) Answer all external media enquiries promptly, professionally and within deadlines where possible/practical
- 5) Build and improve relationships with key external media stakeholders who regularly cover the Council's activities
- 6) Improve coverage of regular/key Council meetings
- 7) Ensure our communications effectively support the Council's efforts to reassure, inform and protect residents and businesses during the on-going COVID crisis
- 8) Re-evaluate existing graphic design resourcing model



1) Build audience

NNDC currently promotes its externally-facing news and messages through a combination of providing our own content on NNDC-owned channels and promotion to key media stakeholders, including (ranked according to audience/circulation figures):



*OFCOM

**RAJAR Q1 2020

***ABC JAN-JUNE 2020

These 'traditional' external media still remain an important source of disseminating news about our council due to their larger audiences, although sales figures for local newspapers have seen a sharp decline in recent years - a trend which will continue due to the unstoppable rise of digital and social media.

All of these media outlets command much larger audiences when you add in their digital media audience on websites and social media, it is worth noting.

While sharing news with these external media stakeholders reaches a large audience and must therefore still a priority for the communications team on behalf of the Council, it is important to robustly present the Council's own news and views to as large an audience as possible via our own content-containing channels.

The larger the audiences we command on our website and social media channels, the greater our 'reach' will be, ensuring our messages reach as many of the local residents as possible.



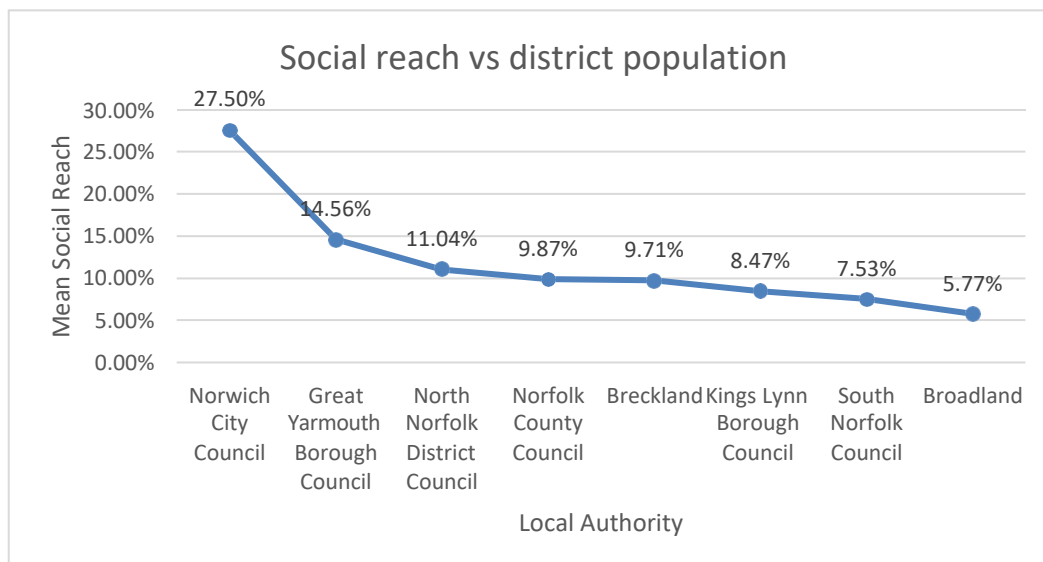
Due to the sometimes formal nature of local authority content and the fact that typically social channels are followed by a younger and more urbanised demographic, building large social audiences can be challenging for an organisation like North Norfolk District Council.

To counter this, it is vital to:

- Produce regular content, multiple times daily
- Significantly increase the use of video content
- Create engaging content, encouraging interaction wherever appropriate

In addition to our website, we are currently producing content on three main social channels, namely Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

With some sharp growth noted in the last eight months, our figures compare favourably to other Norfolk local authorities in terms of 'reach', as the following indicative figures illustrate:



It is vital we continue to build this local penetration/reach by providing quality, bespoke and pro-active content about the Council on these channels. By building our base digital audiences and by providing more engaging content to increase interactivity, we will significantly improve the Council's ability to communicate with a larger percentage of the District's population on a regular basis.

This in turn requires cultural internal understanding and acceptance that the labour-intensive work of producing and managing this content is a key priority for the communications team.





Proposed actions:

It is essential that we bend our efforts towards building the audiences on our digital channels, to ensure we reach many more of our residents and that our presentation of the Council's activities achieves more prominence in their understanding of our work.

To do this we need to:

- Strive to promote more engaging content on a daily basis – optimum four pieces of content on each social channel a day, two per day on the website and at least one weekly 'bespoke' feature highlighting the work of members and/or staff
- Improve the 'turnaround' of content internally so news appears as contemporaneously as possible
- Robustly increase video production to support key stories through investing in equipment and training
- Employ less formal and 'stuffy' language and tone in social posts wherever appropriate and encourage interactivity through online polls, 'what do you think?' messaging, Q&As, competitions etc.
- Challenge and change the existing internal culture of using our social channels as a factual 'noticeboard'
- Encourage all staff and members to follow our social platforms and to engage with them positively and appropriately
- Vigorously promote our social channels on the website and similarly, use the social channels to push traffic to our website. Especially to support the Customer Service delivery plan of encouraging people to engage with the Council digitally where possible and appropriate.
- Use paid-for social promotion to boost audience for key posts in the public interest, eg around COVID
- Aim to increase base audiences by end of 2021 to the following:
 - Twitter: 10,000
 - Facebook: 6,000
 - Instagram: 4,000



Timescale: Immediate/On-going



2) Re-launch/reinvigorate Corporate Plan, its objectives and our delivery against those objectives

The Council has a progressive, impactful Corporate Plan for the period covering 2019-2023. Effective public delivery of a finalised version of this plan on the website has been seriously hampered by the understandable focus on responding to COVID since around March 2020.

While COVID remains of course a serious priority for the Council, it is important to reassure residents the 'normal' work of the Council also continues where possible and appropriate.

Work on the online PDF Corporate Plan brochure is nearing completion and this should be available to share publicly by the end of December. This provides an opportunity to editorially revisit some of the core components of the Corporate Plan and produce some positive communications around our work in these areas – for example with progress on the tree-planting, or a video feature around people using the Electric Vehicle Charging Points installed in our district.

Proposed actions:

- Finalise work to complete the Corporate Plan brochure to enable us to present it digitally as a PDF page-turner and in print form where appropriate
- Use the launch of this finalised version as an opportunity to re-launch the Plan itself and its far-reaching aims and objectives, with engaging content including interviews with the Leader, portfolio holders responsible for delivery on each objective, key officers if appropriate
- Regularly update on progress against objectives, clearly referencing the Corporate Plan and linking back to the full Plan where appropriate

Timescale: January onwards





3) Establish appropriate balance between external and internal communications

As part of its commitment to improving internal communications, the Council has in previous years invested significant time and money into the development of an extremely comprehensive intranet service for its staff and members.

The Council's main news is all robustly presented multiple times a day by the communications team on our social channels and the website and therefore does not need to be re-packaged for staff on to the intranet, using an entirely different content management system. They should instead be prompted by the clear and permanent buttons in the news section on the intranet to visit our externally-facing channels regularly to keep up to speed with our main news.

The screenshot displays the North Norfolk District Council website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for NEWS, TEAM SITES, MY SERVICES, MY NNDC, QUICK LINKS, and COVID-19 QUICKLINKS. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into several sections:

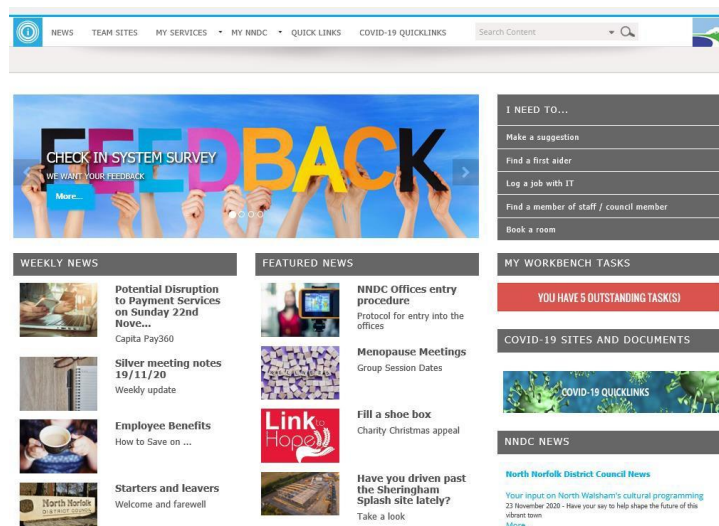
- Weather:** A weather widget for Cromer showing a current temperature of +11°C and a 7-day forecast.
- FACEBOOK:** A social media feed for the North Norfolk District Council, featuring a post about affordable housing with a photo of a residential building.
- TWITTER:** A Twitter feed showing a tweet from @NorthNorfolkDC about affordable housing.
- EXTERNAL NEWS:** A section for external news, featuring logos for BBC and Eastern Daily Press.

The news section on the left lists several items under the heading "NNDC NEWS":

- North Norfolk District Council News**
- Your input on North Walsham's cultural programming (23 November 2020)
- New Budgets to open in Holt (20 November 2020)
- Council passes motion calling for an extension to free school meals provision (20 November 2020)
- Potential Disruption to Payment Services on Sunday (22nd November 8am - 12 noon, 20 November 2020)
- Council passes 'Second Home Business Rate Relief' motion (19 November 2020)
- NNDC Land Searches among national fastest for local authorities (18 November 2020)
- Local Restrictions Support Grant is open for applications (16 November 2020)
- Council urges residents not to travel to Horsey and Winterton (13 November 2020)
- Council mark Remembrance Day 2020 in quiet socially distanced ceremony (11 November 2020)



The intranet is, however, an appropriate space for key internally-facing corporate news, such as the recent organisational restructure, or COVID-prompted changes to NNDC working practices for



example, and the Communications team should certainly continue to help facilitate this material appearing there.

The extensive well-being information for staff offered on the intranet could perhaps be provided and updated by the Human Resources department or by other departments and working groups as relevant under their direction.

The intranet overall currently falls between departments, with at times a shortage of clearly-defined and allocated resource to produce the work deemed necessary to populate it appropriately. Use of the service is

circumstantially sporadic, with informal feedback from councillors and officers often being that they don't use it regularly and are often unaware of its content.

Proposed actions:

- Conduct a review of the current internal communications offerings, potentially involving Communications, HR and any other key internal stakeholders to establish an appropriate way forward. This review to include not just the intranet but also the current delivery of team briefings provided by the relevant team/departmental leaders.
- Consider an anonymous Survey Monkey poll of officers and members regarding the intranet
- Consider the re-establishment of 'departmental champions' to provide and upload staff-facing content about their teams on to the intranet, after review and sub-editing by the Communications team.
- Establish a holistic Council view as to what an appropriate level and methodology of communicating with staff is and establish what resource is necessary to provide this.

Timescale: January 2021



4) Answer all external media enquiries promptly, professionally and within deadlines where possible/practical

This is a critical objective as though some external media stakeholders are experiencing audience decline, they remain a vital way of sharing messages with the local population. Increasingly the local media includes a deadline in its requests for information or comment from the Council and though sometimes these can be demanding depending on the subject matter and the response required, we should strive to meet them wherever possible and practical.

To do this the communications team needs to pick up and pass on media requests as promptly as possible and immediately respond to the journalists to acknowledge receipt – and the colleagues then approached for assistance in responding to these requests by the communications team need to also promptly assist in constructing the appropriate responses in a timely fashion.



It is also vital as an organisation that all media requests which come into the Council via other routes (e.g. direct requests to members or officers) are 'funnelled' to the media team. This enables us as an organisation to have a clear overview of requests we receive, compile monitoring data illustrating external media interest in the Council and ensure an appropriate and co-ordinated response.

We should investigate the provision of training to key officers and members who are likely to be involved in broadcast media interviews, with some simple advice and key pointers as to how to deliver these interviews effectively.

Finally the Communications team should 'ramp up' its support of members and officers whose work is likely to be impacted by a media enquiry. The team should commit to brief members and officers where practical and possible about any relevant media enquiries or pending Council statement that is likely to affect their ward, portfolio or area of the Council's corporate activities.

However, in order to avoid further complicating an already at times cumbersome editorial production process, such advance notice should be with a final, unamendable draft approved where appropriate by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Further communications support can then be offered through the provision of advice and counsel to those affected.



Proposed actions:

- Review all current mechanisms for contacting the NNDC Comms team and re-share with all key external media and internally
- Remind all colleagues to pass on any external media enquiries they receive to the Comms team in the first instance, rather than attempting to answer them straight away themselves
- Ensure all media queries receive a prompt acknowledgement
- Strive to meet external media deadlines wherever possible and practical
- Improve support for members and officers with advanced warning of media enquiries/Council statements which will affect their area
- Investigate provision of training for members and officers likely to be involved in broadcast media interviews
- Create and maintain a record of all external media contacts which come into the Council
- Review, update and re-share the Council's media protocols

Timescale: Immediate/On-going



5) Build and improve relationships with key external media stakeholders who regularly cover the Council's activities

The Council and its key media-facing figures will always benefit from a productive relationship with media organisations whose journalists regularly cover the Council's news and activities. Due to resourcing changes over the years at key external media stakeholding organisations, the previous practice of having the same reporters regularly interacting face-to-face with the Council is no longer the norm.

Requests for interviews/comment usually come in via email rather than telephone, often with a list of questions and a tight deadline for response.

This development has been further exacerbated by COVID discouraging face-to-face interactions and means building productive relationships can be challenging as the current newsgathering process can, at times, be quite remote and detached.

By meeting with key editors and/or journalists in a 'pens down' setting, we can aim to build a slightly more positive working relationship to our mutual benefit.



The solution:

- Invite key local editors/reporters to an informal 'pens down' meeting at the Council, COVID regulations permitting, where we can exchange views with them about how we can improve the ways we interact.
- Aim to establish regular points of contact at each of the main local media organisations.

Timescale: January/when COVID regulations permit



6) Improve coverage of regular/key Council meetings

Due perhaps to limited resource in its recent history, the Communications team has not circulated as much content around matters dealt with/discussed in Full Council or its other key meetings as it might.

Although full reporting on meetings presents some resource challenges, this should be reviewed – particularly in light of the current public broadcast of these meetings due to COVID.



Proposed actions:

- Including benchmarking with the coverage of their meetings by other local authority communications teams, review the feasibility of covering our key meetings on our channels. Even a summary interview with the leader, CEO or relevant portfolio holder covering off the key points after a meeting would be an improvement.
- Aim to have reports of key stories from meetings published on the next working day wherever possible and practical.

Timescale: Immediate/On-going



7) Ensure our communications effectively support the Council's efforts to reassure, inform and protect residents and businesses during the on-going COVID crisis

Broadly speaking our content delivery about COVID has been comprehensive, with key messages around public safety and financial/practical support available to residents and businesses delivered promptly. This is despite occasional challenges in obtaining full clarity around changes to guidelines and regulations etc. from central Government.



However, as we are in another critical phase in the fight against the virus it remains vital that we continue to prioritise regular, reassuring and effective communication about COVID matters via our channels and the key external media.



Proposed actions:

- Continue to stay close to the Norfolk Resilience Forum communications group for sharing of appropriate central messaging and engaging digital assets
- Continue to encourage colleagues to approach us with any COVID-related content which will assist the work of their departments in this area
- Continue to source or create regular video content at appropriate points during the on-going crisis

Timescale: Immediate/On-going



8) Re-evaluate existing Graphic Design resourcing model

The Council currently out-sources most of its graphic design work to various agencies, having dispensed with in-house graphic design resources in 2019.

As a result, the Council is spending money with external graphic design agencies and, due to using more than one agency, sometimes loses consistency around the design work produced on its behalf.

In addition, for smaller, more immediate graphic design work, such as signage required for toilet closures, COVID information etc., due to the lack of a defined internal resource this is currently coming to a member of the Communications team, diverting them from the core objectives of content production and audience-build.



Proposed actions:

Work up a job specification for an internal graphic designer post at c£25k a year. This would provide us with an in-house resource offering better accessibility to departments seeking design support and consistency of design without increasing our spend in this area.

Timescale: Recruit February