

Communications Strategy 2023



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Introduction

South Kesteven is a district full of promise and potential. It is home to innovative entrepreneurs and savvy start-ups; a base for global enterprise; and an inviting landscape perfectly situated in the heart of England. There is much to be proud of and much to offer.

There is an abundance of things to see and do in each of the District's four towns – Bourne, Grantham, Market Deeping and Stamford - and each town has its own rich culture and identity.

The Council's vision is for South Kesteven to be the best district in which to live, work, and visit and it is committed to supporting businesses and working with partners in all sectors to create the right conditions for sustainable growth.

The aim is to ensure communities thrive, are strong and healthy, and there is a firm commitment to building and maintaining housing that meets the needs of all residents. The ambitions include continuing to develop a clean and green future, working with others to ensure respect and protection for the

environment and reducing the Council's carbon footprint by at least 30% by 2030 and becoming net-zero carbon as soon as viable before 2050.

SKDC is committed to continuous improvement of both its internal and external communications and this strategy is designed to help achieve that. This is a Corporate Communications Strategy for the whole Council that every member of #TeamSK can apply to their work.

Communications is a key support service area that sits alongside all the Council does for the residents and businesses it serves. A dedicated team is responsible for the operational oversight, delivery, and coordination of communications activity, providing strategic leadership and advice on media relations; public relations; publications; social media management and monitoring; internal communications; branding; design; community engagement and consultation; and relevant website content.

The Communications Team informs, inspires, and engages communities, partners and



stakeholders on key Council services. In order to do this effectively, the team must deliver a programme of engaging communications and campaigns using a comprehensive mix of channels and media to increase reach and reception.

High-quality communications also extends to internal audiences, and developing a robust engagement strategy should be a key strand of the overall communications strategy.

Effective communication is crucial at all levels – within teams, between teams, between

staff and senior management, and between Officers and Members – and relevant, planned communications should be part of the work environment. It complements the key objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan and the ambition to make South Kesteven **the best place in which to live, work and visit.**

This strategy seeks to help the Council achieve its priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and develop and strengthen the Council's reputation with residents, businesses, partners and employees.



Role of the Communications Team

The Communications Team has a broad remit. Its work is a mix of proactive and reactive elements for internal and external audiences. The team aims to make the most of the positive messages that help the Council sustain visibility and build trust with stakeholders, and strives to mitigate the impact of negative messages that could cause reputational damage. Work is produced in line with brand guidelines, GDPR regulations, media and copyright law, and, when applicable, purdah restrictions.

The Communications Team aims to:

- Communicate the right message, in the right way, at the right time
- Deliver the Council's news in a clear and balanced way
- Inform, engage and inspire both internal and external audiences
- Protect and enhance the Council's reputation, thereby helping to build trust with local communities
- Effectively handle crisis communications
- Help deliver SKDC's priorities and ambitions
- Improve communications across the Council

Objectives that contribute to achieving these aims include:

- Ensuring SKDC's key messages are communicated in an informative, consistent manner using appropriate tools and techniques, including social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn that point to the Council's website for more information: www.southkesteven.gov.uk
- Making the most of opportunities for positive coverage – particularly those opportunities aligned with the Council's strategic priorities
- Managing and mitigating against the impact of negative coverage
- Providing sound communications advice and support to Members and Officers
- Building close working relationships with senior officers and politicians
- Developing and improving SKDC's digital capabilities
- Promoting employee engagement
- Reinforcing the Council's brand identity across all media channels
- Designing and producing a range of publications and promotional material for all media channels



- Consulting on a wide range of subjects
- Producing accompanying and stand-alone artwork for both internal and external audiences

The Communications Team produces high quality press releases, responds to requests for further information, and answers media enquiries in a timely, open and honest way. Arrangements are made for representatives of the Council, usually relevant Cabinet Members, to speak to broadcast media when requested and when appropriate. Another important role is to identify and advise on protecting the Council's reputation.

Although the Communications Team is not a photographic or video agency it will determine whether photographs/images/graphics/video are needed to enhance each piece of work.

Responsible for designing over 90% of the Council's publicity materials and publications, the Graphics Officer is a key member of the Communications Team and is responsible for a wide range of work. An in-house service enables a consistent and cohesive approach across all publications and promotional material. Artwork is supplied ready for: external and internal use; the Council website; social media channels; publications; corporate documents; advertisements; signs; posters; and vinyl banners.

Work can be commissioned by service areas, with each brief including sufficient detail, notice and timescales. As there is only one Graphics Officer, work needs to be planned and prioritised. Identifying suitable training in order to develop skills in video and film will add further value to this function.

Consultation and engagement services are provided through the Communications Team. Working with the service area concerned, the Consultation and Engagement Officer's role is to provide advice and support when consulting with various stakeholders, as well as overseeing and administering public consultation on behalf of the Council. Consultation tends to be either corporate, service-based or undertaken as a result of a proposed policy change or the introduction of a new policy.

Consultation work can be commissioned by service areas with each brief including sufficient notice and timescales. As there is only one, part-time, Consultant and Engagement Officer, work needs to be planned and prioritised.



Corporate communications

The Communications Strategy is designed to align with and sit alongside the Council's Corporate Plan. Communications activity, wherever possible, supports the Council's vision to be the **best District in which to live, work and visit** and refers to five priorities outlined in the document:



Growth and our Economy – delivering growth is fundamental to the success of the District, its businesses and residents.

Communications: Work closely with the Economic Development Team to maintain the team's profile within the business community; highlight the support the team can provide to the business community; promote the use of grants from the Future High Streets Fund and Heritage Action Zone; promote projects supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund; support delivery of St Martin's Park development in Stamford.



Housing that Meets the Needs of our Residents – high quality housing is essential for all and the Council is committed to working with partners to provide this.

Communications: Promote improvements in housing and tenant services; highlight homes for life social housing developments and improvements to existing properties; promote best practice demonstrated by the Housing Team.

Communications: Support the Planning Team with promotion of referendums for Neighbourhood Development Plans. Work with the Planning Team on an on-going review of, and consultation on, the adopted Local Plan.



Healthy and Strong Communities – supporting communities to be healthy is important, as well as providing support through difficult times such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living challenge.

Communications: Promote Council action and support tackling Cost of Living challenges; support the Council's wellbeing work; highlight continuing involvement in the Homes For Ukraine scheme, plus other support for refugees; work closely with LeisureSK Ltd on leisure opportunities and projects associated with the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy; work closely with the Arts and Culture Team on promotion of events and venues across the District; highlight success of CCTV team; highlight events and improvements in public parks.



Clean and Sustainable Environment – protecting and improving the environment is vital for present and future generations.

Communications: Prepare for introduction of purple bins to take paper and cardboard; promote greater take-up of the Council's green waste service; promote in-house grounds maintenance service; highlight Council's on-going carbon reduction measures; support implementation of Climate Action Strategy.



High-Performing Council – residents of South Kesteven are entitled to have high expectations of financial and asset management, and an approach that seeks to continuously improve service delivery.

Communications: Provide an efficient, effective Communications service; continue to build social media reach; explore options for increased social media presence such as TikTok and Instagram; continue live coverage of Council and Cabinet meetings; promote value for money Council services; increase role in county Communications initiatives; collaborate

with IT and Economic Development Teams on introduction of redesigned websites for SKDC and DiscoverSK, and content for the sites.

News gathering

Managing the Council's reputation is an important part of the Communications function. Residents, businesses, and other stakeholders need to know that they can trust SKDC to deliver good services and provide strong, effective and committed community leadership at all times.

Working closely with service areas across the Council, the Communications Team is always on the look-out for good news, and individual team members are happy to be contacted by Members and Officers with ideas and suggestions. There is also a team email address: communications@southkesteven.gov.uk

A digital-first approach to communications is often employed, as we see ever-increasing numbers of followers on various social media platforms. Monitoring, maintaining and updating the Council's social media channels and corporate areas of the website is a main function of the Communications Team, while a redesigned and more user-friendly website – and intranet – is eagerly anticipated.

Ensuring the website is an effective communications tool, designed around support for the Council's objectives and optimising the user experience, is a key priority.

Digital channels of communication act as a source of information, a point for customer interaction and a low-cost alternative to face-to-face and telephone contact and are available 24/7.

Our social media channels and website – particularly useful when dealing with crisis communications – are also used to provide regular updates and have become an integral part of the service delivery.

They offer the most likely means of informing and engaging with the majority of stakeholders and additional platforms should be investigated and introduced if appropriate to build on this. A Social Media Strategy sits alongside this document.

South Kesteven District Council

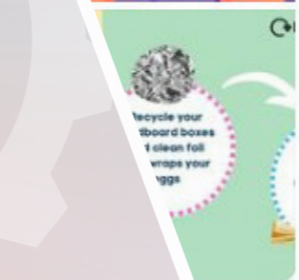
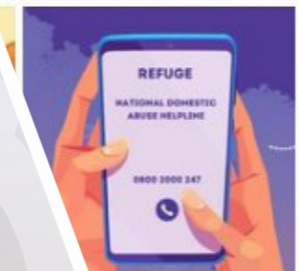
Open Lobbies

Featured

[\(See All Photos\)](#)

Shire Easter Opening Times

Day	Opening Hours
Monday 3 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00
Tuesday 4 April 2023	CLOSED
Wednesday 5 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00
Thursday 6 April 2023	CLOSED
Friday 7 April 2023	CLOSED
Saturday 8 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00
Sunday 9 April 2023	CLOSED
Monday 10 April 2023	CLOSED
Tuesday 11 April 2023	CLOSED
Wednesday 12 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00
Thursday 13 April 2023	CLOSED
Friday 14 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00
Saturday 15 April 2023	Normal Hours - 9:00 - 5:00



Write a comment...

Press Enter to post.



South Kesteven District Council

Published by Hootsuite · 8 March at 19:00 · 🌐

It's likely to be a cold night. Please stay safe and remember SKDC's Severe Weather Protocol is still activated and will be reviewed tomorrow.

If you are concerned about someone who may be sleeping rough, please call us 121 4430.

If it's outside normal office hours, please call 01476 59 00 44 instead. ❄️ ⚠️

SWEP

Active

Severe weather emergency protocol

[See Insights and Ads](#)

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Brand identity

A strong brand is critical and plays an important role in messaging – communicating a cohesive narrative in a visually compelling and consistent way that helps to build trust with stakeholders.

Responsibility for the Council's brand is held by the Communications Team, which ensures consistency in style and appearance.

We want the brand to be synonymous with trust, and protected to ensure it remains a symbol of quality. We need to ensure all internal and external communications complies with branding guidelines.



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Why branding matters

Branding is something we can use to shape other people's perceptions.

Through considered and effective branding activity, we can do a lot to ensure that our brand is what we want it to be.

At South Kesteven District Council we've thought carefully about what we want our brand to represent and invited comments and feedback from across the organisation to input into our thinking which can be summed up as:

We are an organisation that is modern and progressive yet proud of its rich heritage. Distilled down to its shortest form our brand essence is **Proud of our past, focused on the future.**

our brand



Primary colour palette

Colour is a major component of our visual identity and the consistent use will help reinforce its recognition.

The primary colours make up the South Kesteven District Council logo.



Black
CMYK 0 0 0 100
RGB 0 0 0
Web #43444A



Red
CMYK 0 100 100 0
RGB 227 6 19
Web #E30613



Yellow
CMYK 0 20 90 0
RGB 255 205 28
Web #FFCD1C



Green
CMYK 79 7 64 0
RGB 7 163 122
Web #07A37A



Blue
CMYK 90 50 30 10
RGB 5 102 137
Web #056689

Secondary colour palette

Secondary colours can be used to support and complement the primary colours. Four colours are listed here but other complementary colours can be used if appropriate.

You should use your own judgement to ensure that any additional colours used fit with the brand visual feel.



Orange
CMYK 0 49 100 0
RGB 243 148 0
Web #F39400



Pink
CMYK 0 77 29 0
RGB 235 90 125
Web #EB5A7D



Purple
CMYK 64 99 100 0
RGB 12 12 125
Web #4A0080



Process and protocol

Media releases and statements prepared by the Communications Team are checked by a colleague before sign-off by the relevant Head of Service and Cabinet portfolio holder, unless they are purely operational. This ensures any content placed in the public domain is both accurate and consistent in style. A limited style guide that also helps with consistency is due for review and updating.

Obtaining approval for media releases, statements and other material in a timely manner is an area where improvement can be made. Delays can lead to complaints (reputational damage) from media partners, while a 'no comment' approach is rarely followed as it can reflect negatively on the Council.

A better understanding of media requirements by Officers and Members could help tackle this and could be achieved through media training. Guidelines can also be drawn up setting out media expectations.

Calendar News

Rutland Stamford
Mercury

BBC Look North
South Yorkshire/Lincolnshire

Grantham Journal

BBC Radio Lincolnshire

Web development

The Council is committed to developing its website and wants to make the most of its social media channels, using them to build trust and recognition of the brand. Aligned with this the Communications Team can assist with the operation of a modern, user-friendly website that is accurate, up to date and consistent in style, and be involved in the scoping and preparation of any key messaging service areas undertake.

Ready to react

Sometimes, despite best efforts, events may not go according to plan. It is important in these circumstances that the Communications Team is informed as soon as possible in order to determine the most appropriate messaging to mitigate potential reputational impact. Early involvement in issues likely to be controversial or sensitive is key.

Internal messaging

Internal Communications should motivate employees and help them understand the Council's vision and objectives. It can also help identify issues that staff want to hear about or discuss.

The workforce is the Council's most valuable asset whose knowledge, experience and commitment should not be under-estimated. Current channels of internal communication include a weekly message to staff from the Chief Executive, regular Wellbeing messages from HR and an annual staff survey.

There have been improvements in both content and presentation of the regular messaging, while the practicality of an internal 'news ticker' and home screen messaging on PCs are among other ideas being considered.

Steps are being taken to encourage a two-way dialogue with staff and show what changes as a result of their feedback. The Council's People Panel is helping to achieve this, offering

members of staff the opportunity to comment on proposals and contribute ideas and initiatives in a safe space.

Successful internal communications can have a positive impact on performance, staff retention, innovation, customer satisfaction and wellbeing.

Conclusion

The Communications Team prides itself on being approachable and accommodating, and strives to assist as far as possible. Communications should not be regarded as the sole responsibility of the team, but as a combination of the knowledge and experience available throughout #TeamSK.

Ideally, most Communications should be proactive rather than reactive and early involvement in projects and campaigns help achieve this. Project leads are encouraged to invite a Communications representative to be in at the start of both external and internal initiatives in order to help shape the resources required to achieve success including, for example, a Communications Plan; which stakeholders need to be engaged; key messages; and potential risks.

This strategy will help ensure delivery of a credible and consistent message across all platforms that represents the voice of our residents, members and staff, and defines how

we will talk to our audiences and how we will listen to what they are saying.

The Council makes a huge difference to the lives of South Kesteven's communities. Its communications should focus on positive, proactive messaging with examples of best practice given centre-stage. A strategic and consistent approach, with opportunities mapped out and prepared in advance that are linked to the Corporate Plan and the Council's core values, will provide a sustained level of visibility.



Contact Details

Alternative formats are available on request:
audio, large print and Braille

South Kesteven District Council
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✉ communications@southkesteven.gov.uk

🖱 www.southkesteven.gov.uk

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