

## **Communications and Engagement Strategy 2013 - 2018**

### **Evaluation and examples of good practice to support priorities 2013/14**

#### **Providing opportunities for residents and communities to be more involved**

Widespread communications activity to promote opportunities to give views led to over 3,700 people feeding their views into the cycling strategy consultation, including 200 who attended a debate that was broadcast live on BBC Surrey. Tactics included promoting through social media – during the live debate there were almost 400 tweets; including 115 retweets.

As part of the Travel SMART programme, targeted communications with communities in seven areas around Woking, Guildford and Redhill to apply for funding to support local schemes. This resulted in 125 applications for community funding and 86 grants being awarded. Over 300 people attended local events to vote for the schemes to be funded.

#### **Carry out communications and engagement to support and promote the priorities outlined in the corporate strategy**

Proactive media work and activity outlined below is focused on the corporate priority themes:

Improving roads	Support for economic growth
Investing in schools	Supporting vulnerable children and adults
Providing value for money	Launch a campaign to reduce litter
Supporting vulnerable people to live independent lives	

Coverage on these themes resulted in **318 pieces of media coverage**. Much of this was in the national media including: BBC National News, BBC PM Programme, BBC Online, BBC Sunday Politics, Sky News, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio 2, The Sun, The Times, Daily Telegraph, ITN, Daily Mail, Guardian, Evening Standard, The Independent, Daily Express, LGC, MJ, The Press Association and Daily Mirror.

**Improving roads** – The ‘report a pothole campaign’ resulted in 11% increase in satisfaction with the condition of the roads in residents who were aware of the campaign.

Communications also worked alongside highways to raise awareness of and engagement in the additional investment opportunities to invest in roads through Operation Horizon.

**Investing in schools** – Communications activity to support online school applications has helped to result in 96% of applications being made on time online.

**Supporting young people/economic growth** – Active promotion of the Surrey Opportunities Fair by introducing radio advertising and increased use of social media to support evening sessions helped achieve a three-fold increase in attendees over the previous year – 336 in 2013 versus 120 in 2012.

There was also significant media coverage for the activity the council has undertaken to support apprenticeships, helping the council and Surrey to take a leading role and achieve impressive targets in employment for people on apprenticeship schemes.

**Support for vulnerable children and adults** – The fostering campaign in October resulted in 47 enquiries from potential foster carers, a 68% increase over the monthly average of 28 enquiries.

The Dementia Friendly Surrey campaign has resulted in 78% of people saying it had increased their understanding of the condition. 63% said it had made them more supportive and over 100 individuals and organisations have signed up as champions.

**Supporting vulnerable people to live independent lives** - a campaign to promote telecare doubled the enquiries to the service which offers a range of products that enable people to stay living in their homes for longer. The November campaign and new promotional materials which have been widely distributed have had a positive impact over time. In terms of web hits, the November campaign made the number of unique visitors peak to the highest for that financial year, but continued promotion is needed to sustain hits to the site.

**Delivering savings** – Open and clear council performance and financial information published in an annual report and was welcomed by the Surrey Tax Action Group (STAG).

We also published and promoted a booklet outlining 50 ways the council has delivered value. This included an article in Surrey Matters magazine highlighting our budget pressures and the 50 ways we've delivered value. Research has shown that people who say they read Surrey Matters are more likely to feel the council communicates honestly and accurately with them.

All waste reduction, recycling and reuse activity is designed to make savings by either reducing the amount of waste we produce or recycling and reusing waste – hence savings on landfill, collection and disposal costs.

95% saying the furniture re-use campaign encouraged them to buy reusable furniture from the Surrey Re-use Network (which had a 25% increase in footfall and sales during the campaign).

76% of residents said they had reduced food waste as a result of the Love Food Surrey campaign.

**Litter** – Research was undertaken primarily online and through Surrey Matters to get residents views on what type of litter is a problem, where it's found and who causes it. This has informed a campaign about the penalties for dropping litter, which launched on 31 March. This approach is designed to supplement activity carried out by districts and boroughs and others across Surrey.

**Improving health and well being** - 76% increase in people using the Active Surrey activity-finder (with nearly 2,800 Surrey families signing up to the Change4life programme).

45% of respondents saying that the Explore Surrey campaign had influenced them to visit the countryside and 51% of residents said the Travel SMART campaign had increased their frequency of walking or cycling

Surrey had the fifth highest amount of residents signing up to Stoptober from all local authority areas in England and Wales - 4,498 people. During September and October 1,918 people contacted the Surrey Stop Smoking Service for support in quitting with 407 people mentioning Stoptober. This represents a 362% increase on last year in the amount of people contacting the service as a result of Stoptober.

**Supporting economic growth** – Fifty-five proactive pieces of media work were produced between April 2013 and March 2014, securing coverage in local, regional and national media –including the Evening Standard, Press Association, BBC Online, BBC Sunday Politics. Communications around the roll-out of superfast broadband, the promotion of the survey of Surrey businesses in association with Surrey Connects, and the Build Surrey website were highlights, addressing important business concerns.

Communications produced briefing material for MPs and other key opinion-formers around Surrey Future's programme of investment in infrastructure, focusing mainly on transport links. Communications also designed the public exhibition materials for consultation on the Guildford gyratory consultation which aims to tackle congestion - a major constraint on economic growth.

**Priorities campaign** – in addition to the above we've also started a campaign to inform and engage people on the wider council and directorate priorities.

Benchmarking research has just been carried out to establish current awareness of these priorities and will be repeated in six months time to measure effectiveness of activities.

## **Resident's awareness of council priorities**

- 28% - Reducing litter in Surrey
- 27% - Caring for Surrey's environment
- 21% - Improving Surrey's roads
- 21% - Keeping Surrey families healthy
- 17% - Protecting Surrey's vulnerable children
- 17% - Supporting Surrey's vulnerable adults
- 13% - Creating opportunities for Surrey's young people
- 11% - Helping Surrey's families to thrive
- 6% - Strengthening Surrey's economy

At the same time we also measured residents' awareness:

That the council is looking at new ways to improve services – 59%

That the council needs to make changes due to national financial pressures – 58%

Of what the council is doing to deliver value for money – 50%

Of the ways in which residents can shape services – 38%

We also looked at whether residents believe the council communicates honestly and accurately with them – 49% agree while 15% disagree.

## **Increase our digital ability, this includes improving our web site and supporting officers and members to communicate with people via social and digital media.**

### **Website**

Communications played a lead role in redesigning the council's website. Visits to the new site have increased by 9% from 1.7million to almost 2 million.

Online transactions have also increased dramatically:

- Reporting faults such as potholes and streetlight faults are up by 84% from approximately 32,500 to almost 60,000
- Payments online are up by 175% from just over 4,000 to almost 12,000.
- Online applications for services such as school transport, blue badges, music lessons and dropped kerbs were also up - by 101% from approx 14,700 to 29,700

The website has also been awarded SOCITM's top 4 stars in their Better Connected Annual Report. It is also one of only five sites that made it into the reviewers' favourite sites for excellent information and being easy to follow with a very good mobile version.

We've also driven traffic to the new Healthy Surrey website through communications campaigns which include Health Checks, resulting in 69,725 hits since its launch in October.

## Digital channels

We have established a **digital communications group** so that all work across the organisation to coordinate activity and share learning.

The number of Surrey Matters Twitter followers has doubled (from 6,952 to 13,314) over the past year, including an extra 2,000 during flooding. Facebook likes have tripled from 615 to 2,283.

The Digital Press Office has attracted more than 225,600 visits over the last year, while SurreyNews is the most followed council Twitter account with more than 17,200 followers. Followers increased by approximately 4,000 during flooding.

The number of SurreyNews YouTube hits from April 2013 to March 13 2014 was 17,783. The number of videos produced during same time period was 44.

Social media is also increasingly being used as part of campaigns activity. For example on the Sneaky Drinks campaign to encourage cutting down on alcohol, social media posts reached 129,127 people and 1,291 shared, liked or commented on them.

We held social media workshops which were open to all members and 26 members attended. Some were already actively using social media, others didn't want to use it proactively but wanted to monitor it and get a feel for what people are talking about.

We have are also increasing the benefit we can gain from YouTube, which as well as being a social media channel is also the second largest search engine after Google. Optimisation of six videos to date has led to an 124% increase in views over four months.

Communications also further developed use of other digital channels including Google Adwords. Over the 18 months we've been using it there have been almost 46,000 click throughs to campaign web pages with highlights including 7,616 for Health Checks and 5,457 for Buy with Confidence.

Electronic version of Surrey Matters - there are currently 3,286 people on the distribution list, a 43% increase over last year. The monthly open rate is between 50-60% versus the average of 20% for local government e-newsletters. People can sign up on the Surrey Matters pages of the website, from links on other pages and are offered the option on the website feedback survey.

A social media policy was developed and is online for staff and members to refer to if they have social media accounts or are thinking about starting one.

## **In addition....**

All of the above supports our aim to address the communications and engagement challenges associated with the tasks identified in the corporate strategy.

In addition, the Communications Service has won independent recognition of the quality of its work through the Pride Awards from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) – for example, Surrey Matters magazine (Gold Award); digital work on the Olympics (Gold Award); and the food waste reduction campaign, Love Food Surrey (Silver Award)

We also won Best Communications Campaign award for furniture reuse at the LARAC (waste industry) awards.

The quality of our design work has also been highlighted as other public authorities have started to buy our awareness-raising and behaviour change campaign materials. For example, the Eat Out Eat Well Campaign has been bought by Buckinghamshire County Council, Sussex Food Liaison Group and Wiltshire County Council.