

# NKDC Communications and Consultation Strategy 2016-2019

Draft 0.5

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**NB. Final document will contain approval and future review table (final table below), as opposed to the detailed revision and approval development process shown in the first two tables below.**

<b>STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT : REVISION HISTORY</b>				
<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>Reason For Issue</b>	<b>Date</b>
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<b>STRATEGY APPROVAL</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>
CMT	NKDC	Executive		
CMT	NKDC	Executive		
Executive Board	NKDC	Formal Adoption		

<b>STRATEGY APPROVAL</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
<b>Communications and Consultation Strategy</b>	<i>To add once confirmed</i>	<i>To add once confirmed</i>	<i>To be confirmed</i>
<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>		<b>Last Review</b>
1.0	<i>To be added</i>		<b>n/a new strategy</b>

# Foreword



*Cllr Mrs Marion Brighton OBE,  
Leader of North Kesteven  
District Council, with Executive  
Board overview of  
Communications and  
Consultation*

As the District of North Kesteven continues to grow and develop, so do the needs and expectations of our customers, residents and businesses to be better and more fully informed of matters relating to them.

Customers want to see better value, more choice and more responsiveness. Clear, concise, consistent communications are key to that; as are thorough and meaningful consultation activities.

Good communications and consultation are an essential part of good local government and this strategy sets out how we will effectively carry them out.

Successful communications inspire confidence in the services we deliver for our 100 flourishing communities and how we conduct ourselves day-to-day.

It is important the right message is delivered at the right time and to the right audience to ensure all residents and stakeholders remain informed and engaged. The Council is committed to involving people in shaping their local area and services they receive, and public understanding, involvement and engagement is increasingly important to ensure we are delivering services that residents value.

As circumstances surrounding local government continue to change, this will necessitate a constantly evolving approach to communication and consultation – with this strategy being open to revision as we go forward.

There is a strong emphasis on communications being more proactive, interactive and intuitive through smarter use of social media channels, stronger web presence and development of new initiatives – all with a view to supporting and promoting the Council's vision for moving forward with a positive, engaged relationship. All this should be based on outcomes of strong consultation and engagement.

Under-pinning this over-arching strategy, separate communication and consultation plans detail the direct delivery mechanism for supporting the key projects outlined in the NK Plan.

A key priority for Our Council is to be “a high performing and value for money Council that is prepared for the future”. This strategy highlights how our communications and consultation function will help us to achieve this.

## **1. Vision**

To build on the Council's positive reputation by promoting its vision, priorities and projects and ensuring that stakeholders can influence the decisions taken by the Council.

## **2. Communications and Consultation Policy Statement**

North Kesteven District Council recognises that quality communication and consultation, in all forms, is critical to the successful delivery of its services across the District.

For the smooth, efficient and effective administration of the Council, it is essential that all stakeholders – principally residents – are as fully informed and engaged as possible.

Through its actions, the Communications and Corporate Information Teams within the Council are committed to ensuring professional standards in what the Council communicates and how it engages.

To ensure continued relevance, it will continually seek to review and develop its functions in accordance with the adopted Communications and Consultation Strategy.

## **3. Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to set a clear and coherent framework for the development of the Council's communications and consultation functions through to 2019, to ensure our communication and engagement methods are clear, consistent, accurate and timely, using the most appropriate channels available.

As a result, it will be subject to review during its period of operation.

The Communications and Consultation Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which will be refreshed on an annual basis ensuring that the delivery of this strategy continues to be effective, achievable and appropriate.

It is developed for: Elected Members, the Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and other senior managers who have responsibility for ensuring accurate, appropriate and timely dialogue in support of the Council's aims and ambitions.

However, its impact affects a much wider audience, including employees, customers, partners and stakeholders.

**A single page diagrammatic summary of the Communication and Consultation Strategy is shown in the next page.**

# COMMUNICATIONS & CONSULTATIONS STRATEGY 2016-2019 : Single Page Summary

## VISION

To build on the Council's positive reputation by promoting its vision, priorities and projects and ensuring that stakeholders can influence the decisions taken by the Council.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Greater engagement

Profile and reputation

Better informed

Inclusive

Effective multi-channel

Effective partnerships

Empowering local communities

Continuous improvement

### THEMES

Professionalism

Promotion

Involve and Engage

Insight

Equality

Collaboration

### DELIVERY PROGRAMMES

Transparency

Customer Feedback

Corporate Identity

Delivery

Channel development and new technologies

Harnessing social media

Understanding residents and stakeholders

Commercialisation

Relationships and networks

Accessible

ACCESSIBLE

COST EFFECTIVE

INNOVATIVE

MULTI CHANNEL

PROACTIVE

CONSISTENT

ENGAGING

### SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

INTUITIVE

RESPONSIVE

OPEN & HONEST

PROFESSIONAL

Delivery Plan  
and Project Methodology

Monitoring  
and Review

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Roles and  
Responsibilities

Alignment  
with other strategies

**4. Vision of Communications and Consultation in the future**

- To build on the Council’s positive reputation by promoting its vision, priorities and projects and ensuring that stakeholders can influence the decisions taken by the Council.

**Our vision is therefore:**

- Ensure clear, effective communications and consultation, in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner;
- Making best use of emerging technologies and opportunities;
- Building the Council’s positive reputation;
- Promoting the Council’s vision, priorities and delivery in achieving those aims
- Ensure communications and consultation is an integral part of service planning and policy development
- Ensure both processes are inclusive, clear and accessible
- Ensure full transparency so that it is clear how consultation has fed into the final decision-making process
- To provide clear feedback on what has changed as a result of the consultation and engagement activities.

This strategy outlines the vision and direction of how the Council can take advantage of these opportunities over the next three years and how it can make good use of clear, effective and accessible communication and consultation to positively promote everything the Council is responsible for delivering, and enabling engagement to feed into the democratic process.

The key outcomes the Council expects from the delivery of the strategy are set out on the right of this page.

**STRATEGIC OUTCOMES**

**GREATER ENGAGEMENT:** Increase levels of engagement with all residents stakeholders and businesses

**PROFILE and REPUTATION:** NKDC has a high and positive profile locally, regionally and nationally with a strong corporate identity

**BETTER INFORMED:** That all residents, stakeholders and businesses can easily access and use information learnt and understood through the communication and consultation process

**INCLUSIVE:** To use a mixture of methodologies to ensure any communication and consultation activity is as inclusive as possible

**EFFECTIVE MULTI-CHANNEL:** Provide a range of communication channels that are meaningful and engaging and ensuring all consultees have been provided with all relevant information on which to base their thoughts and opinions

**EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS:** Develop our partnerships with a range of other organisations to better inform and deliver desired local outcomes

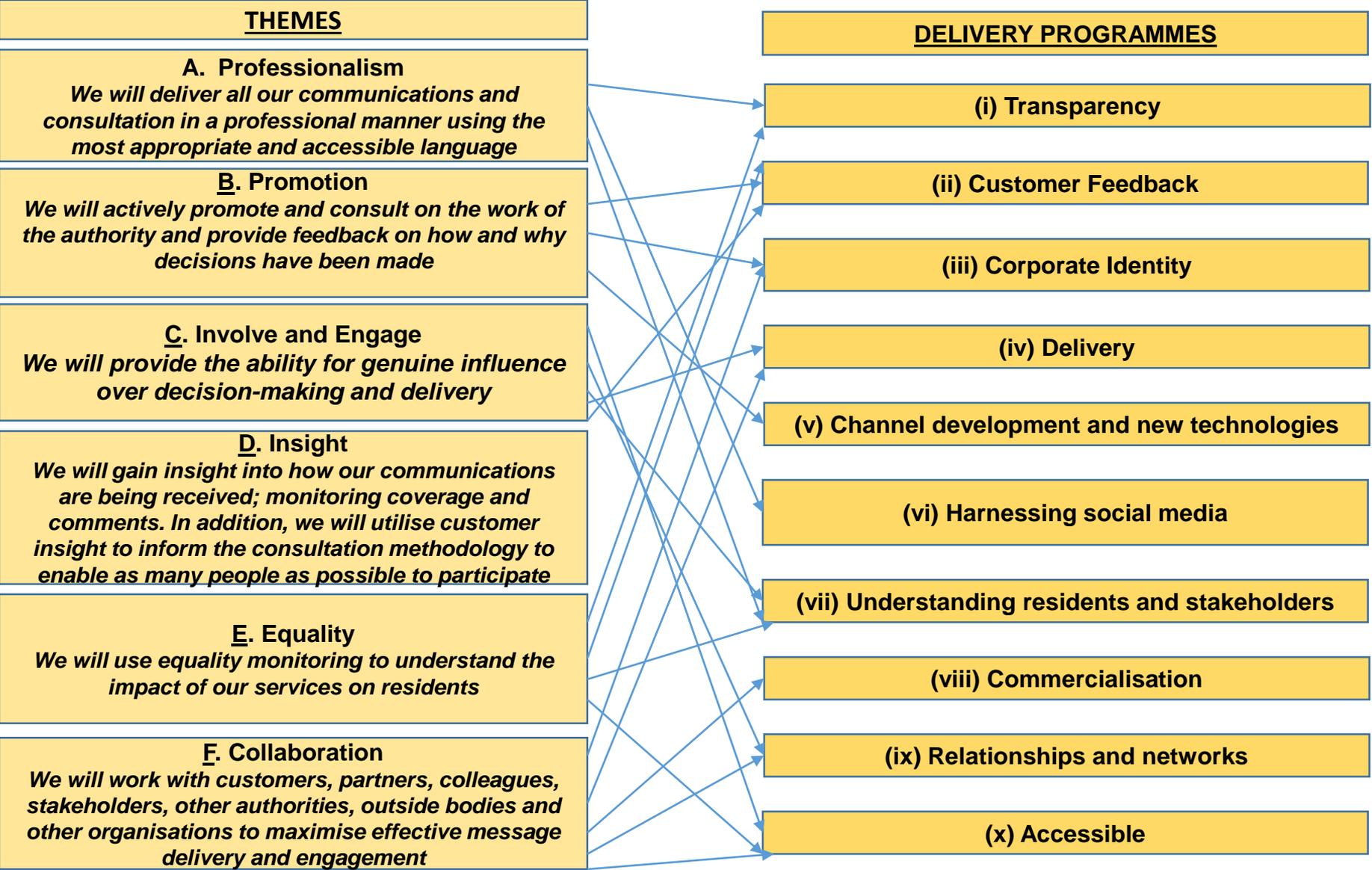
**EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES:** Direct participation to be encouraged to ensure people feel empowered and fully part of the decision-making process

**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:** To ensure that the Council’s approach to communications and consultation is continuously improving and fit for purpose by adopting corporate consistency, unambiguous policies and procedures; and being responsive to new opportunities.

## 5. Strategic Blueprint : Themes for delivery

To support the delivery of the vision, the strategy has identified six core themes which will be underpinned by a series of programmes and supporting projects.

These themes along with the core delivery programmes are set out below:



## 5.1 Strategic Blueprint : Delivery Programmes

The ten core delivery programmes within the Communications and Consultation Strategy are described below. It is a live document and as such the delivery programmes are not necessarily fixed for the duration of the strategy. A high level view of constituent projects and activities within each delivery programme can be found on the next page.

### **(i) Transparency**

To ensure communication and consultation activities are clear, easy to understand and transparent

### **(ii) Customer Feedback**

To ensure feedback is provided so that residents and stakeholders are kept regularly informed

### **(iii) Corporate Identity**

To deliver projects that build consistency in branding, style, and design quality across all Council communication and consultation activity

### **(iv) Delivery**

Setting out, reviewing and delivering against an annual calendar of key campaigns, projects and activity for co-ordinated communication and consultation support

### **(v) Channel development and new technologies**

Review our existing communication channels and take into account the wide-ranging needs of the local communities. This will result in a range of approaches and techniques being utilised for communication and stakeholder engagement. This will align with the Customer Engagement Strategy

### **(vi) Harnessing social media**

Making best use of the (low-cost, high-impact) opportunities presented by social media for communication and consultation activity

### **(vii) Understanding Residents and Stakeholders**

Establishing a deep understanding of the communication and consultation preferences of the full range of stakeholder groups; aligning this with both delivery and channel development, and supporting innovation and change

### **(viii) Commercialisation**

To gain an understanding of the potential income opportunities of corporate assets and possibilities for revenue generation as a communications vehicle as well as scope for wider income generation among in-house Reprographics, Graphics, Communications and Consultation units where appropriate

### **(ix) Relationships and networks**

Understanding how best to develop mutually-conductive, value-adding relationships and networks, both internal and externally, to fully exploit the knowledge both within the local authority and in partner organisations

### **(x) Accessible**

To ensure communication and consultation activities are explained in a concise manner making participation accessible and inclusive





## 6. Principles underpinning the Strategy

The way in which Council services are delivered is changing. Many of these changes are cross-cutting, but there is also a range of service specific developments to be considered.

It is essential that we predict the changes and co-ordinate them to ensure that no opportunities are missed, that duplication is avoided and that the strategy relates closely to objectives defined in the Corporate Plan.

The vision of service delivery to the community, upon which this strategy is based, will be subject to continual review to ensure its relevance to the needs of the citizen, and other stakeholders.

As such, this strategy will be subject to a level of scrutiny to ensure that alignment is maintained.

The key principles upon which communications and consultation will be based are set out opposite:

PRINCIPLES	
<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	Communication and consultation tools and techniques will be designed and deployed to be fully accessible from the point of view of each target audience.
<b>COST EFFECTIVE</b>	The delivery of communication and consultation solutions must offer value for money and ensure that efficiencies can be achieved whenever possible.
<b>COLLABORATIVE</b>	The Council will seek to learn from, and for shared outcomes align, its communication and consultation approaches and solutions with other local authorities and organisations in public, private and third sectors – in order to benefit from improved efficiency, effectiveness and shared objectives.
<b>CONSISTENT</b>	All communication and consultation will be consistent in terms of themes, messages, tone and style to ensure a corporate ‘One Council’ look and feel regardless of audience, and to be instantly recognisable as being from NKDC.
<b>CONTROLLED</b>	We will adopt a ‘One Council’ approach at all times to ensure co-ordination. Direction will be set by Communications Manager, Corporate Information Manager and Head of Service through SMT direction and support.
<b>CLARITY</b>	We will use ‘plain English’ and ensure a shorter and sharper focus to written material.
<b>ENGAGING</b>	We will design communication and consultation approaches that are focused on the end customer, and tailor these to fully engage differing audiences, which will include seldom heard groups.
<b>INNOVATIVE</b>	We will explore and introduce new communication and consultation methods and tools to better engage with and inform all our varying audiences.
<b>OPEN AND HONEST</b>	We aspire to demonstrating an honest approach in all of our activity.
<b>MULTI-CHANNEL</b>	We will develop and deliver multi-channel communication and consultation and ensure that none are left behind.
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>	We will seek mutually respectful relationships with all our stakeholders, whilst ensuring the highest levels of professionalism for all our communication and consultation.
<b>PROACTIVE</b>	We will have clear communication and consultation plans and be proactive at all times whilst retaining the flexibility to deal with the unexpected.
<b>CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</b>	The use of Continuous Improvement, Lean and Systems Thinking will be incorporated into the development of new approaches and processes in the future.

## 7. Governance and Delivery Structures

This section of the strategy pulls together the key aspects of governance and delivery structures covering: Corporate Commitment, Roles and Responsibilities, Delivery Components, Monitoring, Review and Development of the strategy, and links to other corporate strategies. These are set out below and on the next page

### Corporate Commitment

Communication and consultation will both be an integral part of the Council's business planning process

There will continue to be a strategic view of the way communication and consultation is deployed across the organisation

The delivery strong communications and consultation will offer, and will be seen to offer, value for money

There is a commitment to develop the right communication skills for all colleagues and elected members

There is a commitment to collaborating and working with external organisations in the communication plan that support shared objectives

### Monitoring, Review, and Development

As a result of continued service improvements, the Council's transformation programme, evolving local and national governance structures, initiatives and priorities, it is recognised that the needs and direction for communication and consultation may change over time.

This strategy is therefore considered to be a 'living document' and we anticipate it will be refined over its lifetime.

However, notwithstanding those developments, the strategy will be reviewed on at least an annual basis, with a resulting Development Plan being produced for that year.

The delivery of the strategy will also be monitored by the appropriate Executive Board lead and Overview and Scrutiny Panel as applicable.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Governance arrangements for the Communication and Consultation Strategy are shared across a number of functions within the Council.

**Head of Corporate and Customer Services** - ultimately responsible for the strategy, its monitoring, delivery and review, including assessing the impact of service development and wider regional, national and Lincolnshire-wide initiatives on this strategy.

**Communications and Media Manager and Corporate Information Manager** - responsible for ongoing negotiation with service users and stakeholders in terms of service developments which will have an impact on this strategy, the day to day management and delivery of specific strategic initiatives, and for the long term development, functionality and relevance of the Council's Communications and Consultation methodology.

**Corporate Director** – responsible for monitoring the delivery of the strategy; the governance of communication and consultation within the Council; and, the evaluation and recommendation of all communication and consultation developments.

**Member Communication and Consultation Champion** – executive Member with special responsibility for communication and consultation

**Officer Decision Panel / Corporate Management Team** – responsible for the final approval of significant technology developments and budgetary arrangements in the procurement of these developments.

**Executive Board** – responsible for the final approval of the strategy.

## 7. Governance and Delivery Structures cont'd

### Links with other corporate strategies

#### Delivery Components

**Projects** - Although increasing numbers of projects are cross-cutting by nature, there is still a requirement to deliver solutions unique to certain services.

For this reason, proposed projects will be described within the Communications and Consultation Development Plan under the Service to which they have the greatest affiliation, whilst any cross-cutting projects within the council will appear under the section 'Corporate Projects'.

**Budget** – In the main any costs associated with any particular Communications and Consultation activity for a service or project will be borne directly by that Team with budget to be identified from within the relevant budget, or corporate funds as appropriate for any more cross-cutting initiative.

**Resources** – It is anticipated that the level of delivery commitments outlined in this strategy and associated plans can be met from within existing resource; although this will be reviewed during its course and any additional resource need identified, for example, professional training.

<b>Corporate Plan – the NK Plan</b> <b>Corporate Delivery Plans</b> <b>Community Plan</b>	Provides the strategic direction for the development of communications and consultation needed to assist the Council in delivering its Priorities and Plans
<b>Medium Term Financial Strategy</b>	Provides the budgetary input to enable communication and consultation development over the next three years
<b>Our Customer Strategy</b>	Defines the Council's plans for improving access to services, and provides direction for communication and consultation requirements within this area
<b>Information Governance Framework</b>	Provides direction on Information Governance requirements