

Rotherham Highways Communications Strategy

Approvers:

- Cabinet Member: Waste, Roads and Community Safety
- Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene
- Head of Service, Highways
- Communications Account Manager, Regeneration & Environment (R&E)

Distribution:

Cabinet Member: Waste, Roads & Community Safety, Strategic Director: Regeneration & Environment, Assistant Director Community Safety and Street Scene, Head of Services Highways, Highway Asset and Drainage Manager, Regeneration and Environment Communications & Marketing Team, Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing.

Preparation

This document will be maintained by the Regeneration and Environment Communications Account Manager in conjunction with the Head of Service, Highways, and Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing

Review and acceptance

This document will be reviewed by the above distribution list and once amendments have been made the final version will be held on the Rotherham Council website, Rotherham Council Intranet and/or W:\ drive.

Revision & Periodic Review

Updates can be made at any time by members of the Regeneration and Environment Communications and Marketing Team. All updates must be authorised by the Communications Account Manager and Head of Service, Highways. The Communications Manager or Officer will meet annually with Head of Service, Highways, to review the Strategy and propose any amendments.

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1 Introduction and background

Background:

The Rotherham highways function covers a range of services which are of interest to – and impact on – local people. As such the Council is committed to proactive and transparent communication with stakeholders on a number of key themes, such as:

- Roads maintenance (including roads maintenance funding)
- Planned road and street works– for example, gas, water, electric.
- Highway licences/enforcement (for example, obstructions and licences)
- Winter maintenance and adverse weather preparedness (including drainage service)
- Capital investment and major improvement projects, for example, LED replacement programme
- Parking incentives and enforcement

2 Communications Approach

The approach for this strategy will be:

- To develop clear and transparent communication plans for residents, commuters and businesses which align with the Highways service objectives, under the individual service areas outlined above. Each area will have its own bespoke “plan on a page” setting out the overall aim, objectives, and key messages (see section 6)
- Identify the main audience groups for communications (See section 4)
- Provide guidance for communicating with residents and key stakeholders around Rotherham Council’s Highways Services and list the communications channels to be used (See section 5)
- Give guidance on key messages to be used (See section 6). Key messages will be agreed for major schemes, long term strategies (for example, LED street lighting programme) or campaigns requiring communications support, in discussion with the service and communications colleagues. These key messages will be clear, concise and consistent and be aligned with the objectives of the respective service.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Communications and Marketing team will work closely with the service to identify key projects and schemes requiring communications support.

Service managers and officers will consult with the communications team in a timely way to alert them to any potential issues or forthcoming projects which are likely to need communications or marketing support.

The service will also regularly review its online content and work with the communications team to ensure the information is kept up to date.

Quarterly meetings will be held between the Regeneration and Environment communications representative/s and service representatives to review communications requirements.

4 Key stakeholders

Internal Audiences:

- Commissioners
- Elected Members
- Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)
- Rotherham Council Managers
- All Rotherham Council staff

External Audiences:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Commuters
- Partner organisations, including:
 - Emergency services
 - Utility companies
 - Key contractors/third party service providers
 - Transport organisations/providers
 - Parish Councils
 - Rotherham Together Partnership members
 - Neighbouring local authorities
- The media

5 Communications Channels

External Communication:

- **Media:** news releases/statements
- **Social Media:** Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, You Tube,
- **RMBC Website:** RMBC homepage, “Roads and Transport” pages, “Winter” pages, news section
- **one.network** website – enabling public to check on existing and forthcoming works - <https://one.network/>
- **Bulk email:** The Granicus system enables Rotherham Council to email residents who have subscribed to receive council information
- **Elected members/Parish Councils** – where appropriate, local ward members and parish councillors can provide an effective means of distributing information and key messages to local communities
- **Correspondence with residents/businesses** – residents and businesses likely to be affected by proposed highway works will be contacted by the service.
- **Face to face contact with residents/businesses** – where appropriate the service will also meet with residents or businesses who may be affected by forthcoming highway works
- **Signage** – for example, use of roadside temporary signs to inform motorists about forthcoming works

Media:

Regular and timed news releases will help to publicise planned major roadworks and other projects, helping to keep the public informed in conjunction with use of social media.

Social Media:

The Council's “digital first” approach will use social media to regularly post links to the Council's relevant web pages, promote pro-active news articles, give information on activities such as gritting, essential maintenance or emergency road repairs (both by Rotherham Council and third parties), and giving advance warning of adverse weather forecasts (see also Adverse Weather Communications Strategy). Social media will not be used to request a service – users will be signposted to the relevant online form, or contact centre if no form is available.

Consideration should be given to a dedicated Twitter account, either for Highways (focusing on forthcoming road works and schemes – see Sheffield Streets Ahead as an example <https://twitter.com/sccstreetsahead>) or a shared “Street Scene” account with other services such as waste management, which could potentially be run in

conjunction with customer services colleagues alongside the communications team as part of the “digital first” approach.

Website:

Council websites are often the first point of contact for residents to find out information about the authority. The main section of the website relevant to highways is the “Roads, Parking & Transport” landing page.

(<http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/roads>).

The Council’s website also has a dedicated “winter weather” section (<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/weather-updates>). These pages are kept up-to-date with information such as gritting routes, salt bin locations, emergency contact details for services such as Streetpride, Housing (for example, burst pipes); school closures, disruption to waste collections, building closures etc. In the event of a severe weather event (at any time of year) an “emergency banner” may be placed on the website homepage and across the entire site to alert people, signposting to the relevant pages (“winter” or other severe weather page).

These sections can be promoted via the homepage/social media/partner and media websites when necessary. Relevant news items will appear on the news section of the homepage and also on the news sections of the pages above. The main homepage and the landing pages mentioned above also have an image “carousel” which enables particular topics/news items to be promoted in a more eye-catching way.

Online reporting is available to the public for a number of services including potholes, faulty streetlights, and request highway works, for example, issues with road signs or markings. Online forms can be accessed at www.rotherham.gov.uk/report

Highway inspections may also be requested at:

<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/xfp/form/1246>

Services will review their website content on a regular basis and liaise with the communications and marketing team to ensure all information contained on their pages is correct and up-to-date.

In addition, a number of key documents are publically available on the Council’s website and are regularly reviewed, including:

- Code of Practice - Highway Inspection & Assessment
- Drainage Plan
- Winter Service Manual
- Highways Policy, Strategy and Asset Management Plan
- Roads that are gritted
- Highway Maintenance Annual Programme

- Quarterly Performance reports and levels of service
- Street Lighting LED replacement programme

Bulk Email:

The Council currently uses the Gov Delivery email marketing system. Through this, large numbers of residents have subscribed to receive emails regarding the council, including adverse weather and emergency information, roadworks and general news. This mechanism can be used to quickly and easily send information to all subscribers, including pro-active information regarding winter preparations or roadworks, as well as “warning and informing” in the event of adverse weather taking place/being forecast. This same system may also be used to inform partners/key stakeholders.

Internal Communications:

Council staff are among the users of the highway network and many are also residents of the borough. They will therefore also be kept informed of major projects, emergency and planned roadworks, and adverse weather through the following channels:

Intranet: The intranet homepage can link straight through to the relevant news or content pages of the Rotherham Council website, giving a quick and easy way to keep office-based staff informed.

Direct email: Email to all staff can ensure that the majority of colleagues are kept informed at short notice e.g. adverse weather forecast or emergency roadworks.

Newsletters: Weekly (Friday Briefing) or bi-monthly (Take 5) newsletters to staff enable them to be made aware of forthcoming planned roadworks or other projects or celebrate successes.

Manager Cascade: Managers will be reminded to cascade all information to non-office based staff where possible.

Elected Members: Elected members will be made aware of major projects or other planned work through news releases and/or the Members Newsletter. The service will also ensure ward members and the relevant Cabinet Member are kept informed about any schemes that affect their ward, particularly if these are large scale or likely to cause disruption. Before, during and after an adverse weather event, key information will be communicated to elected members by email on a regular basis.

6. Service Communications Plans (See appendices)

Each section under the Highways Service will have a bespoke communications plan with key messages and actions aligned to the individual section’s priorities and objectives.

7 Evaluation

Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out for highways schemes which will evaluate the level of service and how well the customer feels they have been kept informed.

We will also publish quarterly monitoring reports (published on the Council website) including communications, performance, and quality of work

Evidence of outputs will be monitored, including social media posts, press releases, and marketing material.