

18 April 2024

Marketing and Advertising Strategy

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Leader of the Council - Councillor M Bird

1. Aim

Delivering the Council's marketing and advertising activity is the responsibility of Communications Marketing & Brand (CMB) which sits within the Hub. The purpose of CMB is to tell the Council's story by enhancing engagement with staff, elected members, residents and stakeholders; managing and protecting the Council's reputation; and by raising the profile of Walsall Council and the Borough. The aim is to embed a proactive approach to communications, marketing and advertising. Maximising opportunities to raise awareness of Council services and to promote the Borough.

2. Recommendations

That committee notes the update and members support the Council's promotions and priority campaigns by sharing communications content with their communities and across personal networks.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 Communications Marketing & Brand was established as part of the Proud transformation programme. It was implemented in 2022 and forms part of the Hub, alongside Business Insights and Policy & Strategy. The Council's in-house Print & Design service sits within CMB.
- 3.2 The Hub is a set of teams, brought together and centralised to work with service areas to inform and support the delivery of organisational outcomes. It enables a golden thread to connect from Our Council Plan to all parts of the Council. The Hub sits within the Resources & Transformation directorate.
- 3.3 CMB operates an integrated communications model delivering media relations, reputation management, internal communications, member and stakeholder engagement, social media community management, marketing, brand management, campaign development and delivery, public consultations and income generation through advertising. The team comprises of specialists and fully rounded communications professionals.
- 3.4 The priorities for Communications Marketing & Brand mirror the priorities set out in Our Council Plan. Corporate priority campaigns are refreshed each year and

run through the municipal year from June to May. The priority campaigns for 2023/2024 are:

Subheading 1 – Priority Campaigns:

- Regeneration
- Family Hubs
- Street Pride
- Heritage, Leisure & Culture
- Community Safety
- Local Borough Plan
- We Are Walsall 2040
- Staff Engagement & Culture
- Elections
- Children's and Young People's Health
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Tobacco Control
- CQC Readiness

- 3.5 Working collaboratively with our partners is essential to the successful delivery of effective communications and marketing. A place-based approach was adopted during the Covid pandemic to ensure that residents and businesses were fully informed about measures to prevent the spread of the virus and to support the roll out of the vaccination programme. Collaborative working is now embedded. Partners are drawn from the public and private sector, community groups and associations, the West Midlands Combined Authority and from across the local government sector.
- 3.6 Media relations is important for the promotion of Council services and managing the reputation of the Council. Effective relationships have been established with local and regional newsrooms. Former journalists have been recruited to support the handling of media enquiries. More than 40 press releases are issued every month. Most of them issued proactively to promote our service and to support the priority campaigns listed above.
- 3.7 It is estimated that around three quarters of the adult population of Walsall are regular users of social media. At a time when there are more phones in the world than there are people it's essential that the Council engages with residents via those channels that are most popular and convenient. Social media experts in CMB manage the Council's corporate social media accounts. In the last year the number of followers of those accounts has risen by 68% to more than 108,000.
- 3.8 Engagement with elected members and with staff is a priority. CMB supports the Chief Executive with her regular updates. A combination of video and written updates are shared with all councillors, all staff and with MPs and local and regional partners. In addition, around 60 news and information updates are published every month via the Council's intranet, Inside Walsall. Typically, Inside Walsall is viewed more than 160,000 times a month (an increase of more than 100% compared to a year ago). The recent Employee Survey, which was developed and distributed by colleagues within CMB, received the biggest response to any staff survey that we have carried out in recent times.

- 3.9 The management of the Council's brand and identity is important if residents and businesses are to be fully aware of the range of services that the Council provides. Establishing and promoting a consistent brand helps residents to appreciate what the Council stands for, which in turn helps to build trust. Effective management of the Council's brand also supports our recruitment ambitions. In amongst the branding activity this year, signage has been reviewed and updated in the Council House and Civic Centre, the Environmental Services Depot and at Council offices across the Borough.
- 3.10 Income is generated for the Council through advertising on council-owned assets. These include roundabouts, bin lorries and digital adverts on the Council's website. Advertising is coordinated through CMB by our Head of Marketing & Brand. There are 41 roundabouts across the Borough on which space can be sold for advertising. Advertising opportunities also include our full fleet of refuse lorries. Advertising on our website launched a year ago. Opportunities to further grow income with billboard advertising and on other large format advertising on Council-owned land are being explored as well as litter bin advertising and sponsorship opportunities.
- 3.11 Outdoor advertising is also important for the promotion of the Council and our priority campaigns. Examples of this include: the window displays on the former M&S store in the Saddlers Centre promoting plans to transform Walsall town centre; the recent We Are Walsall 2040 resident roadshows were supported by a branded bus which travelled the Borough raising awareness of our long term vision for Walsall; and the Council's fostering service which is promoted on roundabouts and on refuse lorries.
- 3.12 By adopting this integrated communications model which is set out above we are engaging more effectively with residents and businesses and with those who work for the Council. Communications and marketing is raising awareness of We Are Walsall 2040 and sharing the Council's plans to transform the Borough through its ambitious regeneration programme. Performance is monitored through a dashboard which is produced monthly. The dashboard for March 2024 is included as Appendix 1.

4. Financial information

Communications Marketing & Brand operates within its budget and has done so since its implementation in 2022. Income generated through advertising is growing following the expansion of advertising on roundabouts and on bin lorries and following the launch of advertising on the Council's website. Embracing new opportunities will enable us to further grow this income.

5. Reducing Inequalities

Working collaboratively with our partners enables the Council to engage with communities across the Borough. Using evidence-based targeting we can reach communities through digital communications who previously may not have engaged with Walsall Council. Maximising opportunities to tell the Council's story through online and offline channels enables us to reach those who may

not have access to digital devices as well as those who are more digitally connected.

6. Decide

- 6.1 There is an important role for members in helping to inform our residents, raising awareness of the services that the Council provides and in promoting the Borough locally, regionally and nationally. The sharing of information provided through regular updates from our Chief Executive and passing on news updates published on the intranet (Inside Walsall) and on our social media channels, enable the Council to engage with more of our residents and businesses.
- 6.2 Support from elected members for priority campaigns such as We Are Walsall 2040, Family Hubs and for our public health campaigns can help to amplify messages and ensure that the correct information reaches our communities preventing mis-information being spread unchallenged.

7. Respond

Members will continue to be informed of upcoming communications through a weekly planner. Council news and information is available on Inside Walsall and on the Council's website. Colleagues within Communications Marketing & Brand will continue to engage with elected members to facilitate the sharing of communications to all parts of the Borough.

8. Review

Performance is monitored through a monthly communications dashboard (see Appendix 1). If it is useful for members an annual update will be provided to this Committee.

Background papers

Appendix 1 - Communications Dashboard March 2024

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