



Communications Strategy

Date approved: June 2026

Approved by: Cabinet

Next review due: April 2027

Please use the version control table below - see [Version control: a good practice guide](#)

It is often useful to also include information in the header and footer of the document, so that it appears on every page (except the cover page). For example:

- Page numbers in the header
- “Castle Point Borough Council” and/or the title of the strategy in the footer
- The date of the document’s completion (and/or a version number) in the footer

Purpose / Summary of Change	Updated by	Date
Version 0.1 – first proposed version of the strategy	Director Corporate and Customer	March 2026
Version 1.0 – first adopted version of the strategy	Director Corporate and Customer	June 2026

Contents

Strategy at a glance.....	3
Welcome and introduction	4
Setting the scene / situational analysis	5
How we made this strategy.....	6
Priority areas / target	6
Strategy implementation and measuring success	7
Sources	11
Think-Feel-Do Framework	12

Strategy at a glance

The Communications Strategy will:

- Provide a clear, consistent and proactive approach to communications that supports transformation and modernisation.
- Complement the Customer Strategy and align with the Corporate Plan 2025–2028.
- Build trust through transparency, engagement and accessibility.
- Move communications from reactive to strategic, adding value across all Council services.

Links to Corporate Plan

This strategy plays a vital role in achieving the Council's ambitions as set out in the Corporate Plan. By ensuring clarity, consistency and accessibility in all our communications, we will help deliver on five key aims:

- **Working for a prosperous future:** Through proactive communication, we will promote opportunities for residents and businesses, share success stories and highlight initiatives that support economic growth and skills development.
- **Healthier, safer communities:** Our communications will keep residents informed about services and programmes that improve health and wellbeing and provide information to help people feel secure.
- **A greener and cleaner environment:** We will champion environmental initiatives and encourage community participation in sustainability efforts, ensuring residents understand how they can contribute to a cleaner, greener Borough.
- **Restoring the Council to good health:** Transparent communication about decisions, spending and performance will help build trust and demonstrate our commitment to financial resilience.
- **We ♥ Castle Point:** By celebrating local achievements, promoting events, and sharing stories that showcase the Borough as a great place to live, work and visit, we will strengthen community pride and engagement.

Welcome and introduction

I am pleased to introduce our new Communications Strategy, which sits alongside and complements our Customer Strategy. Together, these strategies form a cornerstone of the Council's commitment to delivering excellent services and engaging meaningfully with our residents, employees, and stakeholders.

Communication is not just about sharing information, it is about building trust, listening actively and creating a dialogue that strengthens our relationship with the communities we serve.

This strategy recognises the vital role communications plays in achieving the Council's ambitions. It supports transparency and accountability, ensuring that taxpayers understand how their money is spent and how decisions are made. It also helps us celebrate success, promoting the positive work happening across the Borough.

The Communications Strategy is designed to deliver a modern, proactive approach that meets the needs of a changing organisation and a diverse audience. Internally, it will help employees feel informed, involved and valued. Externally it will ensure residents receive timely, relevant updates, while strengthening our reputation through effective engagement with partners and the media. This is particularly important as we navigate significant transformation, including the Fit for the Future programme and wider changes in local government taking place as a result of LGR and Devolution.

By aligning with our Corporate Plan and working collaboratively across the Council, we will deliver communications that are clear, inclusive, and impactful.

Cllr Dave Blackwell
Leader

Setting the scene / situational analysis

A strong and proactive communications and marketing function is essential at the Council in order to provide employees, residents, businesses and stakeholders with information about the Council and its services. As a democratic organisation, good communication supports transparency and informs taxpayers about how and where their Council Tax and business rates are spent.

Communication is also about listening, and the current Administration has made a commitment to listening to its residents and consulting before major changes are introduced. Communications play an important role in supporting consultation and engagement with residents and stakeholders.

Historically the Council has lacked/removed investment in a corporate communications team, however some services have maintained communications and marketing roles within their areas, particularly leisure. This resulted in a fragmented approach to communications and marketing, with services with resource able to be proactive in promoting the good work they are doing, whilst there was no corporate communications and marketing delivery.

The investment in communications and marketing is a significant change for the Council's approach to communications and engagement. It enables the correction of a significant period of under-resourcing in this critical function and will be central in driving forward the Council's ambitions and agenda.

Castle Point Borough Council is undergoing a significant amount of change. As part of the Council's ongoing commitment to transformation and modernisation, every service area of the Council is being reviewed to improve the customer journey and experience, to identify opportunities and projects which will improve outcomes and efficiency and to take a more commercial approach to maximising assets.

The Castle Point Corporate Plan 2025 to 2028 outlines the strategic direction for Castle Point Borough Council, focusing on five key ambitions: a prosperous future, healthier and safer communities, a greener environment, restoring the Council's health and community engagement. The Corporate Plan encourages greater resident participation and engagement in Council business.

There is considerable change taking place outside of the Council which has an impact on Communications. Most notably there is a great deal of uncertainty around the future structure of local government as a result of devolution and LGR.

Council live meetings have been promoted on social media since November 2024. The Council has a good presence on social media with residents following the Council on Facebook, X and LinkedIn. Nextdoor has recently been added. The Council publishes a bi-annual Castle Point Together Magazine and a quarterly tenants' magazine launched this year. The Council has invested in a new website which launched in December.

For internal channels the Council produces a monthly Connect e-magazine, there is a SharePoint site and a new staff notifications function has been set up on Teams. Corporate Communications with staff who do not have access to email has traditionally been challenging, notably the Waste and Leisure Teams.

How we made this strategy

This Communications Strategy has been developed through a collaborative approach. Castle Point Borough Council has benefited from consultancy support provided by Essex County Council, from April 2025 which has enabled us to embed best practice and expertise into our work.

A dedicated team was formed, bringing together employees from across key communications disciplines - external, internal, social media, and content. This team combined first-hand experience and observations from within Castle Point with the specialist knowledge and insight offered by colleagues. Together, we reviewed existing processes, identified gaps and explored opportunities to modernise and improve the way we communicate.

The development process included:

- **Working with service areas:** Working closely with teams across the Council to understand current communication challenges and opportunities.
- **Expert input:** Drawing on experience in delivering effective communications strategies for local government.
- **Evidence-based decisions:** Using insights from employee feedback, social media engagement and sector benchmarks to shape the strategy.

This partnership approach has ensured that the strategy is practical, informed, and aligned with the Council's agenda.

Priority areas / target

External Communications

Since additional resource has been brought in an improved Press Desk function has been established.

A contact list of local journalists has been set up (and kept updated). News stories are posted on the homepage of the website and sent by email to the press contact list. Incoming enquiries are picked up in a timely fashion, and most enquiries are answered within the journalist's deadline. Responses are drafted and agreed with service leads and then forwarded to the Leader/Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for sign-off. We always provide a response, where appropriate to do so and the majority of deadlines are met though occasionally, we do need to request an extension from the journalist.

A changing landscape in terms of LGR means that there is now a much greater need for collaboration with colleagues across different Councils in Essex. We are now in regular contact with colleagues across Essex councils to ensure a joined up and collaborative approach. We are also active members of the Essex Comms Group, a group for all public sector communicators in Essex. The group meets monthly to share information and resources and to discuss challenges offering access to collective expertise.

Castle Point Borough Council publishes a residents' magazine twice a year distributed via Royal Mail, a trusted provider. While complete distribution to every household across the Borough cannot be 100% guaranteed, Royal Mail is preferred over other providers due to its ability to target every postcode and reliability of delivery. The magazine is valued by members and anecdotally is well read. It does however lack the metrics of a digital approach and has longer lead-in times.

Internal Communications

Castle Point Borough Council (CPBC) is navigating a period of significant organisational change, including the Fit for the Future transformation programme and the wider Local Government Reform (LGR) and Devolution agenda. These changes are happening against a backdrop of shifting workforce needs, hybrid working, and increasing demands on time and attention.

The People Survey 2025 showed strong engagement with over 70% of staff responding. Employees told us they value team spirit, flexibility and making a difference - but also highlighted challenges around communication, leadership visibility, systems and career development. There is a clear appetite for action and a need to communicate progress in a way that is visible, inclusive and empowering.

Internal communications must evolve to meet these needs - supporting leadership and line managers to engage with their teams, reducing information overload (or noise'), and ensuring all employees feel informed, involved and valued.

Content

CPBC has recently launched an improved website. Website content reviews with content experts were held 30 October – 7 November 2025. These influenced changes to the content on the new web platform. New services will be rolled out gradually on the new site over 2026/27.

Strategy implementation and measuring success

External communications

Continue to build open relationships with journalists

Better relationships have been established with key players including The Echo, BBC Essex and the Local Democracy Reporter (LDR). We have named contacts a

regular distribution list for proactive news releases. More open and trusting relationships can now be established including inviting key media to launches and key events and considering trailing LDR briefings.

Review insights from residents' survey

A residents' survey will be conducted each year which will be analysed in order to gain insight into areas of focus including communications preferences. This will provide data on the areas of concern for residents and where communications resource is most needed and can add value.

Review measurement tools

While the Council does not currently subscribe to a media monitoring service, thought should be given to how to capture metrics such as volume, readership, sentiment in order to measure trends over time. We currently have a Google alert set up to alert us to online mentions of Castle Point Borough Council though this will not alert us to broadcast or print coverage. We recommend obtaining a quote from a monitoring service. Alternatively, as over half our media enquiries are coming from the Echo, an online subscription would allow us to monitor a significant amount of print coverage. Coverage would have to be logged manually.

Effective partnership working

Working in strategic partnership with colleagues to present a unified voice and deliver joined-up communications. This is particularly important as we move towards LGR milestones. We will establish working groups to have an active voice in new workstreams such as branding and channels for the new local authority..

Media training

The Council does a limited number of media interviews, and not all members are experienced in interview technique. We have done some media training and some options for perfecting interview technique will be explored which could include sharing resources from partner Councils.

Evaluation

Success can be measured through:

- Volume of coverage
- Sentiment in coverage (positive or negative)
- Metrics from Residents' Survey including overall satisfaction with the Council
- Type of coverage (local, national, trade etc.)

Social media

Create a social specific strategy for all social platforms and embed across organisation

To better manage expectations and content ownership on social media channels a strategy for each platform will be agreed. A content plan will be put in place to help with social performance, through consistent and diversified content and engagement with residents.

Knowledge share and consultation

Support CPBC colleagues with best practice social media advice and guidance.
Provide cover for CPBC team member with primary accountability for socials

Review measurement tools and associated reporting

While the Council currently monitor some metrics, attention needs to be given to how to capturing metrics such as sentiment, impressions and engagement in order to measure trends over time. Reporting templates will be agreed with some benchmarks.

Continue to review opportunities for localised social content

Identify national days/weeks/months and build social content plans for localised social pages with adequate lead times

Evaluation

Success will be measured through:

- Impressions
- Engagement
- Engagement rates
- Follower growth
- Sentiment

Implementation internal communications

Audit and improve communications channels

- Review existing internal communications channels to assess reach, relevance and effectiveness.
- Launch a communications survey to understand preferences and reduce information overload.
- Ensuring messages are clear, purposeful and accessible.

Understand and address barriers

Use insights from the People Survey and follow-up research to identify communication barriers - particularly for non-desk-based staff - and develop inclusive approaches that ensure all employees can access updates and contribute feedback.

Support leadership visibility and connection

Increase the visibility of senior leaders through regular all employee events, 'Back to the Floor' visits, and direct communications. Align with sector-wide findings ([IC Index 2025](#)) that show employees respond best to leaders who are empathetic, open, and genuinely listen. Support line managers with clear, timely messaging to help them connect confidently with their teams.

Support the relaunched Colleague Engagement Network

Support the CEN as a vital peer-led channel for two-way communication. Champions help share updates, open conversations, and gather feedback - particularly in service areas where digital access is limited. Internal

communications will provide regular messaging, engagement opportunities and guidance to help Champions amplify key messages and embed change locally.

Align with 'Fit for the Future' Plan

Embed internal communications within the council's transformation programme, reinforcing progress through "You Said, We Did" messaging, recognition stories, and monthly themes that reflect employee priorities (e.g. development, inclusion, wellbeing).

Content

Working with web team to redesign website content based on content review meeting outcomes.

Roll out of Content standards

Full content standards training sessions with content owners.

Creating a style guide to ensure future content is consistent and there is an agreed house style.

Evaluation

Success will be measured through:

- Website metrics (page views, bounce rates, dwell times)
- Reduction in Contact Centre calls for self-service tasks
- Successfully delivering content standards training to content owners

Sources

LGA Heads of Communications Survey 2025

- On average there are 12.1 FTE staff in Corporate Communications in local authorities performing core functions
- 73% of respondents has comms strategies aligned to corporate priorities
- LGR and devolution was the top communications priority for the next 12 months
- The top three concerns according to Heads of Communications were capacity to delivery, tackling misinformation and disinformation and LGR and devolution

Sector insight - Internal Communications (IC) Index 2025

- Leadership connection drives trust: Employees rate internal communication highest when leaders are seen as empathetic, authentic and approachable. Communications that are inspiring and clear from CEOs correlate with higher trust and engagement.
- Listening matters: Organisations that “close the loop” on feedback - welcoming it and showing how it’s used - see significantly higher employee advocacy
- Change needs care: Communicating change with empathy leads to stronger feelings of being valued and higher trust in leadership.
- Leadership visibility: The IC Index 2025 highlights that a mix of communication methods for leadership has the greatest impact on employee trust and advocacy. Employees are significantly more positive when leaders engage through at least three different channels.

Think-Feel-Do Framework

Audience	Think	Feel	Do
Residents	The Council is transparent and works hard in the interests of residents	Listened to, valued, proud of Castle Point	Engage in consultations, use services, speak positively about the Council
Businesses	The Council supports economic growth and local enterprise	Confident, optimistic and supported	Apply for business support, invest in Castle Point and support local economy
Employees	I enjoy working at CPBC and think it is well led. I understand the strategic direction of CPBC and how I contribute	Valued, motivated and informed	Contribute positively to the organisation, collaborate and speak positively about CPBC as an employer
Media	The Council is a credible and interesting source of local news	Interested and trusting	Cover stories, amplify messages, work together constructively
Members	I am proud to serve CPBC as a member.	Confident, proud and informed	Work effectively with officers, share messages with their networks and wards. Feedback concerns of residents.