



## **COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY**

### **A. AIMS**

The purpose of a communications and public relations (PR) strategy is to create a structured approach for Cranbrook Town Council, Councillors and Officers for the below purposes:

1. Establish and maintain effective communications internally and externally.
2. Raise the public profile of the Council.
3. Establish and maintain positive reputation of the Town and the Council.
4. Respond proactively to both opportunities and challenges in the public arena.
5. Provide efficient and timely response to external enquiries including from the community and media.
6. Foster collaboration and improve operational efficiency within the Council.
7. Improve engagement and morale within the Council.
8. Ensure strategic alignment within the Council.
9. Manage and mitigate crises.

### **B. KEY COMPONENTS**

1. Audience analysis: Identifying key audience segments and their needs.
2. Messaging framework: Developing core messages that align with the Council's values and objectives.
3. Media channels: Choosing the appropriate channels (traditional media, digital platforms, social media) for distributing messages.
4. Content strategy: Planning, creating, and distributing relevant content (press releases, blog posts, social updates) to engage the audience.
5. Crisis management: Developing a proactive plan for handling potential crises, including media responses and internal communication.
6. Measurement and evaluation: Submitting reports and analysis regularly assessing the strategy's effectiveness to adjust for improvements.

## C. PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

1. Ensure that Councillors and Officers are aware of and familiar with the existing Councillor and Officer Protocol which outlines roles of Councillors and Officers and the relationship between Councillors and Officer, which are crucial for effective internal communication and collaboration.
2. The Council must comply with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986<sup>1</sup> regarding publicity. All media relations work will comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity<sup>2</sup>. The Code is statutory guidance and the Council must have regard to it and follow its provisions when making any decision on publicity.
3. Communications Officer's duties:  
The Communications Officer is responsible for developing and promoting the Town and the Council's reputation across the full range of marketing and public relations activities. The Communications Officer will remain non-party political and provide subjective professional advice to the whole of the Council, and will:
  - i. Provide factual accurate information about the Council
  - ii. Promote Council initiatives in consultation with the other Officers and Council Chair / Chair of a committee, including media information, briefings, publications, events and other communications
  - iii. Maintain good media relations
  - iv. Enhance communications with external groups
  - v. Conduct news and social media monitoring
  - vi. Submit regular reports and analysis to the Council to assess the strategy's effectiveness to adjust for improvements.
4. Spokesperson designation
  - i. The Council Chair or Chair of a committee may act as spokesperson for the Council in responding to the press and media and making public statements on behalf of the Council but should liaise with the Communications Officer on all forms of contact with the press and media. A Councillor may be appointed as a spokesperson where there is an identified area of expertise with the agreement of the Clerk and Communications Officer.
  - ii. Individual Councillors should speak to the media on behalf of the Council with prior authorisation. This can avoid conflicting statements and maintain message consistency.
  - iii. Where a Councillor or Officer receives a direct question or ad hoc request for a quote from the media (e.g. face to face or telephone call), they should respond with known facts and immediately inform the Communications Officer with the media contact information, questions and the response. Any

---

<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Act 1986 (LGA 1986) is an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament that primarily restricts local authority publicity, especially political publicity. The Act was passed in response to the Greater London Council's use of publicity to prevent the Local Government Act 1985 Bill from passing.

<sup>2</sup> The Publicity Code provides guidance on the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity.

other approach from the media (e.g. written) should be referred to the Communications Officer.

5. Social media

Social media includes (but not limited to) social networking and applications such as Facebook, Instagram, X, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Flickr, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, discussion forums, wikis. Cranbrook Town Council is currently using Facebook and Instagram.

- i. Councillors and Officers do not post or share anything that they would not say or share in public.
- ii. Councillors and Officers do not share confidential information nor information which is sensitive.
- iii. Councillors and Officers should make it clear that personal posts, including political content, are not related to or on behalf of the Town Council. There is a risk that, due to their positions, personal posts made by Councillors or Officers may be misconstrued as official statements or actions of the Town Council by members of the public.
- iv. Monitoring community social media is a helpful way of getting a sense of community feeling but it is important to bear in mind that what is said on social media may not reflect the views of the wider community.

6. Media relations and press materials

- i. Councillors will direct all media enquiries to the Communications Officer. The Communications Officer will provide professional advice and co-ordinate any agreed response thereafter.
- ii. All publicity materials including media statements and press releases will be co-ordinated by the Communications Officer in conjunction with the Clerk, Council Chair, Committee Chair or Official Spokesperson as appropriate.
- iii. Where media interest is also relevant to the work of the District or County Councils, the Communications Officer will coordinate any media statement or response with the Communications Officer at the respective Council. Where Town Councillors who are also members of the District or County Council receive a media request as a District or County Councillor and the subject matter also relates to the role of the Town Council, the Communications Officer will be informed so that the response can be properly coordinated between the respective Communications Officers.
- iv. Whenever possible, press and social media materials will be supported by photographs. Councillors and Officers will respect copyright.

- v. In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018<sup>3</sup>, the Council must receive consent prior to the use of photographs, video images and audio of adults and children. For small-scale activities, the Council should request participants to complete a consent form. For large-scale events, verbal consent will be obtained from participants. Where possible, the Council should consider minimising the use of photographs and videos where participants' faces are visible.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Everyone responsible for using personal data has to follow strict rules called 'data protection principles'. They must make sure the information is: used fairly, lawfully and transparently.