



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Marketing and Communications Service

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE PLAN - 2024 / 2025

Date

Consulted within staff team

12/ 04 /2024

Discussed & signed off by Director

/ /2024

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1.0 OVERALL PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE DEPARTMENT

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Department

The Marketing and Communications service forms part of the Chief Executives Department and provides strategic and operational marketing and communication services to the Council.

There are 5.5 staff members within the service structure, all based at the Council's Magherafelt offices.

1.2 Responsibilities

Marketing and Communications: The service develops and delivers external and internal marketing and communications which supports the Council's vision, values and strategic direction.

This includes (but is not limited to)

- marketing and communications planning and delivery across departments and services
- brand management
- the development and content management of multiple digital platforms (web and social media)
- the proactive management of media relations
- delivery of in-house graphic design services
- communications support for the Chair, Deputy Chair and Committee Chairs.

1.3 Customers & Stakeholders

Customers & Stakeholders
• Elected Members
• Internal Staff
• Media
• Mid Ulster Residents
• Council Service Users
• Central Government Departments e.g., DfC, DfI, DAERA, DfE

1.4 Performance Overview in 2023/24 (Retrospective Review)

2023/2024 Performance Response/ Overview (What we achieved- Measured Activities)	End of Year Progress Status: Activity was - Completed /Commenced/ Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver an integrated marketing and communications plan to address dog fouling and littering hotspots. <p>The service developed and delivered an integrated marketing and communications plan to address dog fouling and littering throughout 2023-24. Actions focused on several key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Spring Clean Campaign launched in April 2023 encouraging residents to organise Big Spring Clean events in their areas. Reminding residents that we loan the litter pickers, provide the bin bags and collect the rubbish after the event. The efforts help to keep Mid Ulster clean, tidy and free from rubbish. • Dog fouling campaign launched in June 2023 encouraging responsible dog ownership by cleaning up dog mess and carrying poo bags at all times for disposing of dog waste to help keep our district clean and tidy and to help protect the environment. • Rubbish Visitor campaign shared in June 2023 encouraging residents not to be a ‘rubbish visitor’ by leaving no trace behind of their visit to our parks and forests by disposing of any waste properly in bins to help keep Mid Ulster clean and tidy. • Publicity of the chewing gum task force carried out in July 2023. The Council secured a grant of £25K from the chewing gum task force to remove chewing gum from our footpaths which helped restore unsightly paths in our towns and kept paths presentable and clean. • Further dog fouling campaign publicity issued in July and August encouraging residents to continue to exercise responsible dog ownership by cleaning up after their dog while out and about at our parks, forests and footpaths to help keep Mid Ulster clean and tidy. • Publicity issued in July 2023 about Mid Ulster securing 5 green flags for Dungannon Park, Davagh Forest Park, Ballyronan Marina, Maghera Walled Garden & Hill of the O'Neill emphasising the 	<p>Completed</p>

standards upheld at our parks and outdoor spaces, encouraging residents to help keep them that way out of civic pride.

- Paint reuse scheme was launched in July 2023. This scheme prevented the illegal dumping of paint in the district by introducing a handy and environmentally friendly way for disposing of any unwanted paint.
- Uniform reuse scheme launched in August 2023 encouraging residents to donate any used uniform items in good condition so they can be reused to avoid unnecessary dumping which will affect the environment, while at the same time helping families who may not be able to afford brand new school uniforms to purchase the items more easily at a reduced cost.
- Vape recycling campaign carried out in September 2023 encouraging residents to dispose of vapes correctly to avoid littering and to reduce contamination in our household refuse bins.
- Recycle Week 2023 publicity issued in October 2023 - Join the Big Recycling Hunt - calling on children aged 5 to 11 in Mid Ulster to take the lead in protecting our environment and looking after our planet.
- International E-Waste Day publicity was carried out in October 2023- highlighting the importance of recycling ALL vapes separately from household waste & recycling to protect the environment and prevent disposal of vapes on our roads and paths.
- A Halloween recycling campaign ran from 26 – 31 October 2023 to promote the importance of recycling properly and reducing food waste over the Halloween period.
- European Week for Waste Reduction publicity was issued in November 2023– this year’s theme was packaging, so we encouraged residents not to use unnecessary packaging to help protect the environment and reduce dumping on our roads.
- A Christmas Recycling Campaign ran from 5 December 2023 to 3 January 2024 to encourage residents to recycle properly and reduce food waste over the Christmas period.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further dog fouling campaign publicity issued in January 2024 to remind residents to exercise responsible dog ownership by ensuring to clean up after their dog to help keep the district clean and tidy. • A Food waste recycling campaign ran from 19 – 29 February 2024 encouraging residents to reduce food waste through reuse and recycling to help them save up to £1,000 a year while also protecting and benefiting our environment and planet. • Big Spring Clean promotion for 2024 commenced in February 2024 encouraging residents to keep our district tidy by taking part in Big Spring Clean events for the new season and organising them in their areas. Reminding them that we support all efforts by loaning litter pickers, providing the bin bags and collecting the rubbish afterwards. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Digital Transformation Communications actions to contribute to a more connected Mid Ulster • The service has continued to manage the review and updating of content on the Council’s website, removing content that is underused and updating change items, for example, new services, initiatives, price changes across leisure, planning, environmental services and cemeteries. • Web accessibility, content and user experience has remained a priority for the service. • The website has received 424,401 visitors over the course of 2023. • An email marketing tool has been secured and an initial template has been designed to support delivery of corporate email messaging in the next financial year. • The service has provided significant support to assist with customer service, registration, missed bins and dog licencing digital transformation strategy work throughout 2023-24. • The service has completed a pilot exercise to research social media management tools which involved creating a long list of martech social media management tools that would streamline our publishing and response to enquiries. A resulting short list of three were trialled by the service and the results of 	Completed

<p>the trial used to identify the best tool in relation to effectiveness, efficiency and value for money to be implemented in 2024-25.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver a Sustainable Communications Plan to support the Council’s sustainability and climate change programme • Initial research for a sustainable communications plan has been completed and the service has engaged with the Waste and Sustainability Officer as well as participated in the Climate Change Action Plan workshops. • Further progress is dependent on the publication of the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan (still to be confirmed at the time of writing) which will inform the final Sustainable Communications Plan. 	Commenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver an internal communications strategy and action plan that connects, engages and brings together all Council staff. • Due to resource pressures within the service structure, this objective was paused and will be carried forward to the next service improvement plan. • The service continues to contribute to the delivery of member and staff briefings and manages the intranet as the Council’s key internal communications channel. It developed a Staff Matters newsletter template and works with the HR team to publish to all staff within the organisation. 	Carried Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to create and deliver an integrated communications plan for the Council’s capital investment programme • The service has contributed significantly to the communication of the outputs of the Council’s capital investment programme, through inputting into the Capital Projects Board and delivering communications activities across several key investment programmes, including those listed below. • Significant assistance has been given to support the Maghera Regeneration Programme, which has included creation and delivery of communications activity across all three strands of the programme, managing significant media and online social media interest in the programme. 	Completed

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support has been given through the marketing and communications service for community engagement events for the Coalisland Canal Active Travel and the Altmore and Cappagh projects.• An online and print publicity campaign was delivered to mark the official opening of the Derrynoyd and Drumcairne Forests capital projects in March 2024. | |
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2.0 IMPROVING OUR SERVICES AND MANAGING PERFORMANCE - 2024/25

The following tables confirm the resources, financial and people, which the Department has access to throughout 2024-25 to deliver its actions, activities and core business.

2.1 Budget 2024/25

Budget Headings	£
Central ICT Costs	5,200
Fees	3,000
Office Expenses	92
Marketing Costs	63,000
Staff Costs	311,630
Gross Budget	382,922

2.2 Departmental Services - Council Structure - 2024/25

Chief Executive's Service: Marketing and Communications



Staffing	No. of Staff
Assistant Director	
Head of Service	
Managers	1
Officers	4.5
Remaining Team	
Total	5.5

2.3 Service Work Plan - 2024/25

This plan outlines the core activities and actions, which will form your Department (by Services) or Departmental Service Work Plan for 2024-2025.

This is a high-level capture of the Department and the Service outcomes /activities/measures as well as some improvement undertakings which the services will focus on throughout 2024-2025.

The Plan links to hierarchy of other plans and measures such as:

1. Community Plan
2. Strategic plans e.g. Local Development Plan
3. 2024-2028 Corporate Plan priorities,
4. Annual Corporate Performance Improvement (PIP plan)
5. Corporate Improvement Project Plans (CIP's)
6. Statutory Indicators,
7. Corporate Health Indicators

Mid Ulster District Council's Improvement Objectives for 2024 to 2025 are:

1. Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action
2. We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them
3. To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and environment
4. We will contribute to the on-going regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people

SERVICES WORK PLAN 2024/25

Service Name: Marketing and Communications						
Link to Community Plan Theme:			Align to Corporate Plan Theme			
<i>CMP 3.3 Education & Skills - We are more entrepreneurial, innovative & creative</i>			<i>Theme 1 : Our Service Delivery</i>			
Service Objective (What do we want to achieve?):		What are the key activities we will deliver (actions):	By When (Date?)	Service Name /Lead Officers(s)	What difference will it make? (Outcomes)	How Will we Know? (Measures) clear measurement e.g. %, #, £, date etc.
No.001	A connected, engaged and cohesive staff complement that feels informed and involved.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lead on the research, development and delivery of a new intranet that is fit for purpose and suitable for integration within other online tools currently in place. 2) Work with key content leads from each of the directorates to establish the functionality and content needed for a new intranet. 	Complete by March 2025	Marketing and Communications Development Manager / Design & Digital Officer	Improved internal communications that will contribute to a connected and engaged employee group that feels informed and involved.	SMT decision made. New intranet to be implemented (budget implications to be confirmed).
No.002	Ensure that the Council understands the needs of its staff in order to target communication effectively	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Complete a staff survey to establish employee feedback and provide a benchmark for the development of internal communications 	December 2024	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	Results of the survey will inform effective internal communications strategy.	% of employees participating in survey Survey results

SERVICES WORK PLAN 2024/25

Service Name: Marketing and Communications						
Link to Community Plan Theme:			Align to Corporate Plan Theme			
CMP 3.1 Education & Skills - Our People are better qualified & more skilled			Theme 3: Being the Best Council Possible			
Service Objective (What do we want to achieve?):	What are the key activities we will deliver (actions):	By When (Date?)	Service Name /Lead Officers(s)	What difference will it make? (Outcomes)	How Will we Know? (Measures) clear measurement e.g. %, #, £, date etc.	
No.003	Improve cross-directorate/service communications and increase external PR opportunities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop a pilot cross-service communications working group, chaired by the M&C Development Manager that will improve communications. 2) Hold four meetings of the group per year. 3) Design and carry out campaigns plan in line with priorities raised by Working Group. 	<p>Group established by June 2024</p> <p>Programme of work agreed by July 2024</p>	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	<p>Communications will be improved by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a key contact within each service area to develop positive communications initiatives. Developing and embedding corporate communications Sharing and disseminating good practice Using knowledge, skills, and capabilities in a more effective and co-ordinated way 	<p>No . Of meetings held</p> <p>Media coverage</p> <p>Social media data</p>

No.004	Develop more engaging social media content such as video to explain Council priorities and activities and to increase awareness of services Council provides.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Create corporate social media content plan to address key themes throughout the year. 2) Procure external video production company to assist in provision of content. 3) Publish content on corporate social media channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content plan drafted by June 2024 • Company procured by August 2024 • Completed by March 2025 	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	Stakeholders aware of Council's vision, priorities, and remit through effective campaigns. The awareness and understanding of the Council and the services it delivers is improved.	Social media and digital analytics to measure reach and engagement
No.005	Continue to develop and deliver an integrated marketing and communications plan to address dog fouling and littering hotspots	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop and deliver quarterly action plans in partnership with the Environmental Health service to include positive stories about what we're doing well. 	Completed by March 2025	Marketing and Communications Officer (Corporate Lead)	Residents are supported to reduce dog fouling in their neighbourhoods. Reduction in incidents. Recognition is given to the efforts of community groups.	EH monitoring figures of incidents and hot spots Media coverage Social media data
No. 006	Ensure our communications allows us to prepare, respond and recover in a crisis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Draft a crisis communications improvement plan including the development of a toolkit to include playbook. 	Completed by June 2024	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	The plan will assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities during a crisis, define how the M&C service will support the delivery of the BCP, build our crisis comms expertise, and create a living structure, that can be flexed to learnings as we deal with more crisis situations.	Improvement plan in place. Crisis comms toolkit in place.

SERVICES WORK PLAN 2024/25

Service Name: Marketing and Communications						
Link to Community Plan Theme:			Align to Corporate Plan Theme			
<i>CMP 3.3 Education & Skills - We are more entrepreneurial, innovative & creative</i>			<i>Theme 2: Leadership and Partnership for Local Growth</i>			
Service Objective (What do we want to achieve?):		What are the key activities we will deliver (actions):	By When (Date?)	Service Name /Lead Officers(s)	What difference will it make? (Outcomes)	How Will we Know? (Measures) clear measurement e.g. %, #, £, date etc.
No.007	Ensure the reputation of the Council is protected and raise the profile of the District in a positive way.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue to provide a proactive approach to Council news and supply local, regional, and national media with ready-made stories. 2) Continue to monitor the media for reputational issues and act if necessary. 3) Improve social media monitoring through implementation of social media management tools. 4) Secure 2-4 positive pieces of TV coverage a year from proactive media work and selling in of stories. 	Completed by March 2025	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	Our residents, businesses and visitors are aware of our activities and trust us because we communicate effectively.	90% of all press releases used by at least one media outlet. 80% positive or neutral tone of coverage 2-4 TV pieces achieved
No.008	Ensure the Council's brand is applied consistently and within identity guidelines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review existing brand guidelines. 2) Extend brand guidelines to include tone of voice, style guide and all instances of 	Completed by September 2024	Marketing and Communications Development Manager	Our corporate body communications will be clear, consistent, unified, credible and effective.	Revised brand guidelines are produced, communicated internally, and

		brand application internally and externally.				are in operation consistently.
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2.4 RISK MANAGEMENT OF DEPARTMENT/SERVICES

The purpose of risk management is to manage the barriers which prevents the Council from achieving its objectives. This section of the service plan includes space for the Department to input their key risks (in summary form), which have been identified during the business planning process. The Council uses risk management to maximize opportunities and minimize risks. This improves its ability to deliver priorities and improve outcomes. This is why the Council deems it important to link business planning and risk management. Risk Management aims to:

- Help the Council achieve its overall aims and objectives
- Manage the significant risks the Council faces to an acceptable level
- Assist with the decision making process
- Implement the most effective measures to avoid, reduce and control those risks
- Balance risk with opportunity
- Manage risk and internal controls in the most effective way.

This table illustrates the risks identified to deliver the Department's/Services business as outlined in service plan for 2023-24.

Risk Ref Number	Description of Risk	Risk Rating	Mitigation Activity
MC01	Misuse or inconsistent use of the Council's branding internally and externally.	6	Brand guidelines in place, reviewed and updated. Service oversees and has oversight of brand application and manages internal graphic design service to ensure correct application.
MC02	Ineffective use of the Council's social media channels.	6	Documented protocol issued to all staff, only designated staff with access to content management of social media channels, ongoing monitoring of social media channels and regular contact meetings with service/facility-based social media editors.
MC03	Failure to adhere to Public Sector Bodies (website and mobile apps) Accessibility regulations.	2	Accessibility standards monitored on a weekly basis using the third party tool, Silktide, issues addressed either directly via the service or, where required, by engaging with the Council's web development company to address technical accessibility issues.
MC04	Failure to communicate effectively in response to emergencies or crisis situations.	8	Emergency / Business Continuity Plan in place with sections relating to Communication Plan. Ongoing review of lessons learned in response to managing communications in emergency or crisis situations & continued attendance at the EP Public Information/Media Working Group.

Rating	Descriptor
16 - 25	Extreme Risk (immediate action required)
10 - 15	High Risk (urgent action required)
7 - 9	Moderate Risk (action required)
1 – 6	Low Risk (keep under review)

3.0 OUR STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

In carrying out our responsibilities, the Service is cognisant of the statutory duties placed upon the council in the delivery of its services. Whilst the Service operates, under various obligations it is however mindful of the changing context in which it operates and endeavours to mainstream the equality and rural needs duties in the design and delivery of our functions.

3.1 EQUALITY DUTY

The council and by consequence our Service is committed to contributing towards its part in working towards fulfilling obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to ensure adequate time, staff and resources to fulfil our duties.

The Service will also work towards adherence to the council's Equality Scheme ensuring equality duties, together with promoting positive attitudes towards persons with a disability and the participation of people with a disability in public life when carrying out our functions.

3.2 RURAL NEEDS DUTY

The Service will be mindful of the rural needs of its customers when carrying out its functions and subsequent responsibilities, particularly in developing any new policies, plans or strategies throughout the year. In line with the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 we will give due regard to rurality in terms of needs in carrying out the activities within our Service.