



# Communication Strategy

## PROMOTING & IMPROVING DOVER TOWN COUNCIL'S REPUTATION THROUGH COMMUNICATION

*Adopted by Dover Town Council on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – Minute No. 322b*

Communications can:

- help us achieve our overall organisational objectives;
- engage effectively with stakeholders;
- demonstrate the success of our work;
- ensure people understand what we do;
- change behaviour and perceptions where necessary;
- provide information;
- seek opinion.

And thus improves and promotes the reputation of any Council!

Central to improving our community engagement is the quality of our communications with those who live, work and visit the town of Dover. Recent years have seen major changes in the way that we communicate specifically in relation to social media. It is important that the Council maintains a communications service that is relevant to audiences throughout the town. We must continue to investigate all opportunities that these changes offer and where appropriate make use of them.

**In order to achieve good and effective communications, we aim to:**

- Inform residents, businesses and visitors to the town about the work of the Council, the services it provides and how they can get involved in shaping decisions;
- Maintain a strong and recognisable Council identity;
- Avoid misunderstandings about the Council's responsibilities and services so that people can consistently be involved in our vision and plans for the future;
- Improve and maintain Dover Town Council's reputation;
- Ensure that our members and our workforce are involved and engaged in the work of the Council through good internal communications so that they can represent and champion the Council in the community.

**Promoting and improving Dover Town Council's image and reputation with its key stakeholders will be achieved through the following principles:**

- Conveying consistent messages about the Council's objectives and values to internal and external stakeholders;
- Supporting improved satisfaction with Council services and its reputation through better information, communication and consultation;
- Developing a culture of seeking to consult and encourage participation in order to learn and improve;
- Providing clarity about the purpose of consultation and target it accordingly;
- Ensuring deliberate and joined up efforts are made to consult, including hard to reach groups, providing the opportunity for stakeholders to comment on Town Council priorities and projects through developing 2-way communication.

**Communication is undertaken by the Council through a variety of channels and formats. However, there are certain key principles that should guide all our communications activity.**

**All our communications will be:**

- Honest, open and accurate;
- Accessible to all members of the community;
- Clear, simple and user-friendly;
- Timely, current up to date and relevant;
- Cost-effective;
- Consistent;
- Legitimate - in accordance with relevant legislation, national codes of practice and within the Council's own protocols and guidelines.

Delivery of our services, our strategic vision and our Ambition Plan can have varying impacts on different groups, organisations and people in Dover. And this should be taken account of.

**The Councillor's role in Council Communication:**

Both Councillors and staff have a role in effective communication.

- Communicate with courtesy and tolerance;
- Represent views of their ward and town electors;
- Be willing to explain the Town Council's decisions and views;
- It is important to be clear with audience whether a Councillor is speaking from a personal, Councillor or Council point of view.

**Our key audiences include:**

- Dover residents;
- Businesses in Dover and those who may relocate or invest here;
- Voluntary organisations and groups working within the town;
- Town Councillors and Council employees;
- Stakeholders and partners including neighbouring parish Councils, Dover District Council and Kent County Council;
- Those working in and visiting the Town;
- The local, regional and national media;
- Specific groups, including ethnic minority communities, older, younger and disabled people and socially excluded groups;
- Central Government and Government offices.

**The Council employs a range of communication methods. Currently, the principal means of communication are:**

**Internal & External Notice Boards used for displaying things such as: -**

- Financial information relating to the Auditor's Annual Report, Annual Accounts and Councillor's Allowances;
- Relevant insurance documents;
- Summonses and agendas for upcoming meetings;
- Names & contact details of Councillors;
- Local events and services.

**Website: -**

- More information is also available on Dover Town Council's website [www.dovertownCouncil.gov.uk](http://www.dovertownCouncil.gov.uk) and this includes up-to-date news and special features;

**Social Media: -**

- Means of interactive dialogue between Council, Councillors and members of the public;
- Widening audience for partners;
- Promoting the role and activities of the Mayoralty;

- Increasing participation in activities and consultations.

**Town Council Offices: -**

- Face to face contact to resolve issues and enquiries and signposting to other local services;
- Copies of Statutory documents (on request);
- Information on history & heritage of MDH and Mayoral regalia;
- Town Centre Maps, information & leaflets relating to Dover Town events and organisations.

**Press Releases: -**

- Information and photographs on Town Council Projects, Grants given and funding to external organisations;
- Request for participation/volunteers;
- The Town Council's position on relevant issues affecting the town;
- Photographs & features relating to the Mayoralty.

**Internal Communication – Meetings/Briefings & Reports: -**

Through our internal communications we aim to ensure that staff and members are informed, involved and engaged in achieving the Council's objectives.

- Face to face briefings and meetings between officers and members;
- Information about the wider work of the Council, including the reasons behind strategy and policy decisions, and progress on our key objectives;
- Weekly Bulletins containing information on upcoming meetings/events and any relevant documents are sent electronically to both Councillors and staff;
- All Councillors are provided with a 'pigeon hole' where written communication will be left for them to collect. Urgent items not collected will be sent to Councillors through the post each Friday;

**Consultation:**

The Town Council canvasses opinion over matters of significance and chooses from a wide range of consultation methods appropriate to the subject and the population to be consulted.