

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities
to Cabinet
of 28 November 2023**

**Subject: Communications Strategy 2023-28 and
 Communications Team Staffing Proposals**

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for: the Communications Strategy 2023-28; the Communications Team staffing required to deliver the service and the strategy; and for approval for revised guidance on Managing Work Related Social Media and Media Relations.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1.1 considers and approves the Communications Strategy 2023-28 (Appendix 1);

2.1.2 approves the conversion of 2 temporary Communications Assistant posts to permanent posts to support the delivery of this strategy and to ensure the continued delivery of the service;

2.1.3 approves the Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees (Appendix 4); and

2.1.4 approves the Media Relations Guidance (Appendix 5).

3. Background

3.1 The Communications Strategy 2023-2028 has been developed to align with the Council Plan 2023-2028. The strategy, which can be viewed at Appendix 1, is underpinned by the Council Plan and proposes 3 key strategic goals:

1) Grow our audience;

2) Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice;

3) Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

3.2 The strategy builds on the significant improvements made to communications output since the Communications team transferred to Organisational Development and Customer Services in 2019. Key improvements include:

- Social Media - The introduction of a range of corporate social media channels, providing engaging and informative public messaging and building over 58,000 followers;
- Campaigns -The introduction of a standardised, professional approach to campaigns, with over 200 campaigns designed, developed and delivered from 1 January – 30 September 2023. This includes a campaign to promote and cover the airshow which generated a reach of 1,771,539 on social media and webpages during the course of the event itself;
- An increase in digital, radio and TV coverage, with the service designing and launching the Council's first Sky/ Virgin TV; You Tube and in app adverts;
- The introduction and content management of an employee Yammer Channel to provide more engaging communications and information to employees;
- The introduction of a corporate approach to design and branding and an increase in in-house design and animated video production. As at 30 September 2023, this had saved the council £99,535 in cost avoidance since 1 January 2023 (the cost to outsource this work).

3.3 More details on the activities carried out by the Communications team can be found at Appendix 2.

3.4 The current substantive Communications team comprises 4 FTE - 1 Co-ordinator, 2 Communications Officers and 1 Design Officer.

3.5 The substantive structure is not adequate to deliver the volume, range and quality of communications provided currently and in recent years. This has only been made possible as additional temporary resource has been funded/ provided in a range of ways taking the team to 7 FTE in 2021/22 and 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix 3. Key to this additional resource has been the creation of temporary Communications Assistant posts, two of which were funded for 23 months from central support additional resource requirements agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021. Following the departure of one of the assistant postholders who was funded from this central support funding, ELT agreed to use the balance of funding for this post to extend the contract of the remaining central support funded assistant. Currently the team has 2 temporary assistants – one funded by remaining central support funding and the other from a temporarily vacant post in OD. At its meeting of 29 August 2023, Cabinet requested that a review of Communication support requirements be presented to them prior to making any decision on whether to retain these two Communications Assistant posts permanently.

3.6 As detailed at Appendix 2, the Communications Assistant posts are crucial to the effective running of the Communications team and to the continued delivery of the service. If temporary assistant posts are not funded beyond 2024, output will reduce by 70 hours per week, meaning a significant reduction in the number of communications campaigns produced; limited social media; a significant reduction in corporate social media channels; limited use of YouTube, video or animation; minimal if any social media monitoring; live events coverage reduced and restricted to the Air Show and a requirement for services to outsource a volume of design work.

- 3.7 In addition to the above temporary arrangements, support has also been provided by an officer from the Economy and Regeneration Team. This support has been critical to delivering communications campaigns and activities including press releases, press enquiries, speechwriting, events coverage and promotion including the airshow.
- 3.8 Without staffing the service adequately, neither the current volume of output, nor the strategic goals set out in the Communications Strategy will be achievable.
- 3.9 A benchmarking exercise with other, neighbouring Council Communications teams identified that our substantive structure of 4 communications posts is significantly below the average number of 9 officers.
- 3.10 **Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees**
- 3.10.1 The Communications team manages corporate social media channels with significant numbers of followers. A small number of services manage their own social media channels, targeted at specific groups e.g. school social media accounts. Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees has been developed to support employees who use social media in the course of their job. This guidance can be found at Appendix 4.
- 3.11 **Media Relations Guidance**
- 3.11.1 Media Relations Guidance has been developed for employees and Elected Members to ensure that any contact with the media helps enhance and protect the reputation of the Council. This guidance can be found at Appendix 5.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that 2 temporary Communications Assistant posts are converted to permanent posts, to support the delivery of this strategy and to ensure the continued delivery of the service. These will be funded from future staffing budgets when temporary funding arrangements detailed at 3.5 have been exhausted.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The Guidance issued in paragraphs 3.10.1 and 3.11.1 satisfies the requirements of the Local Authority Publicity Code of Practice and the provisions of section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The recommended option would cost £84,163.38 annually funded as per the below.

Post	2023/24	2024/25
Comms Assistant 1	Funded for 12 months from vacant OD post until September 2024 and as per Appendix 3.	To be included in future staffing budget from September 2024
Comms Assistant 2	Funded as per ELT agreement 482-SCC-OD and Comms.doc from balance of central support funding until November 2024, as detailed at 3.5 and as per Appendix 3.	To be included in future staffing budget from November 2024

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Assistant Communications Officer posts have been on the structure temporarily for 2 years and have been job evaluated at Level 7.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 The risks associated with rejecting the recommendations are: that we will not be able to continue to deliver the activities provided by the Communications team beyond autumn 2024 when temporary Communications Assistant posts cease to be funded and that we will be unable to provide the volume and range of communications activity required to meet the council's ambitions. If temporary Assistant posts are not funded beyond 2024, output will reduce by 70 hours per week, meaning a significant reduction in the number of communications campaigns produced; limited social media; a significant reduction in social media channels; limited use of YouTube, video or animation; minimal if any social media monitoring; events coverage reduced and restricted to the Air Show and a requirement for services to outsource a volume of design work.

9. Equalities

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), **(including the Fairer Scotland Duty in respect of any Strategic decision)**, has been carried out on the proposal contained in this report, which identifies potential positive and negative equality impacts and any required mitigating actions. The EQIA is attached as Appendix 6.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 Communications is an enabling service and the matters referred to in this report contribute to all priorities of the Council Plan.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been public consultation on communications via a survey. Feedback from this survey can be found within the Communications Strategy at Appendix 1.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Dowey, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic, and Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.3 Consultation has taken place with Trade Unions and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.4 Consultation has taken place with staff and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Strategic Change and Communities will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Implement new staffing arrangements – advertise, recruit and appoint to permanent Communications Assistant posts	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services
Launch Communications Strategy	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services
Launch Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Launch Media Relations Guidance	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services

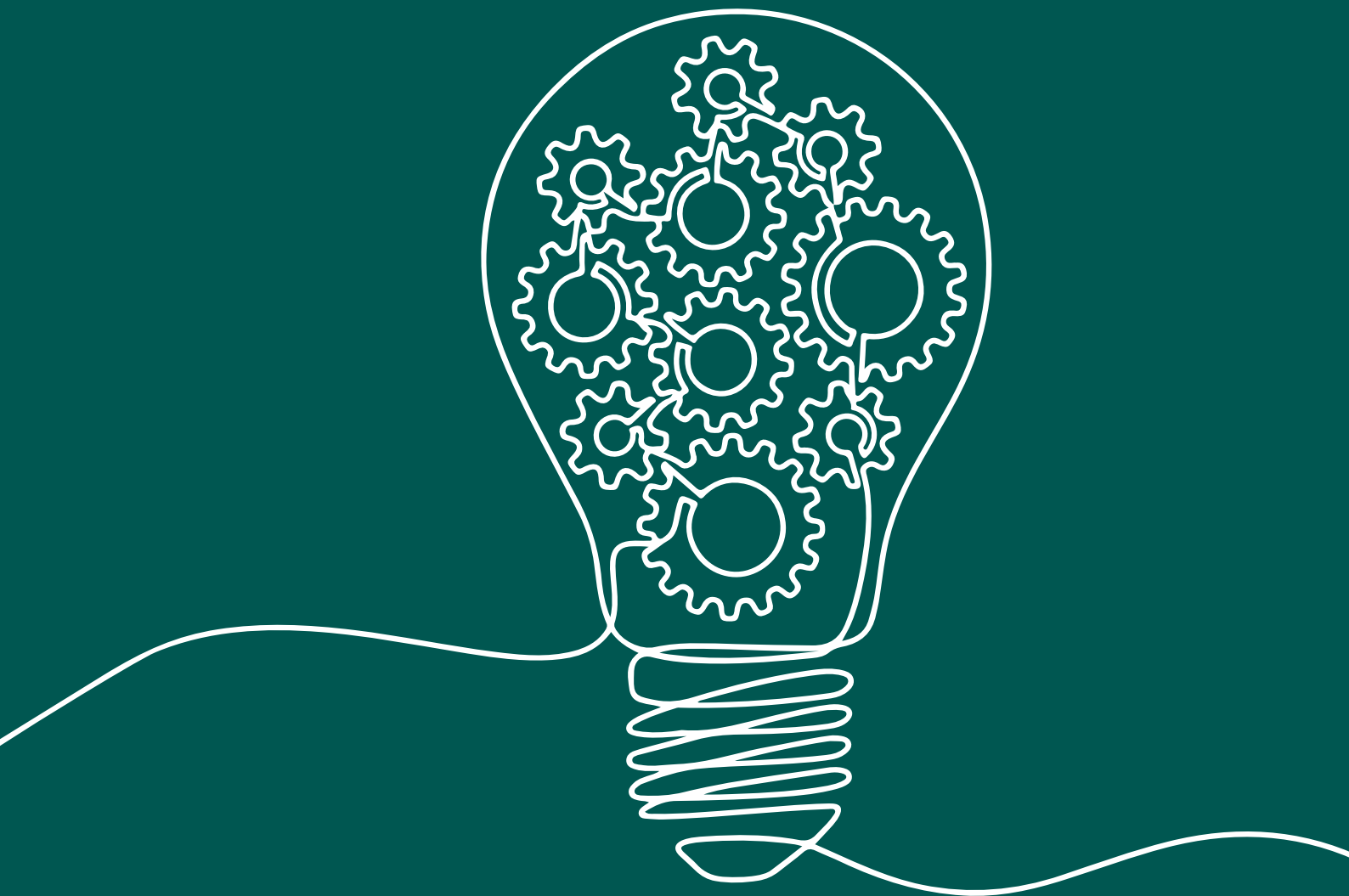
Background Papers **Report to Cabinet of 29 August 2023 – [Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues – Update](#)**

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Date: 22 November 2023

Communications Strategy

2023-28





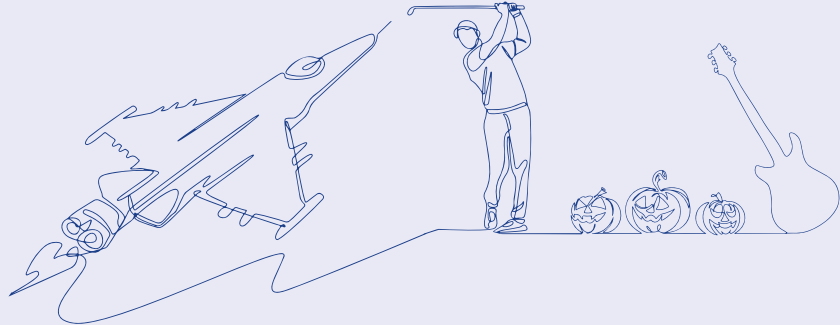
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
IS KEY TO THE DAY TO
DAY RUNNING OF
THE COUNCIL



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Foreword from Councillor Martin Dowey Leader of South Ayrshire Council



We are ambitious for South Ayrshire and our [Council Plan 2023-28](#) is based on priorities and outcomes that we believe will have the greatest impact on the wellbeing of our communities, our local economy and our environment. This Communications Strategy sets out how we will make sure people know what we are doing to deliver on our Council Plan priorities and outcomes, how they can get involved, and the difference that we are making.

It goes without saying that we want to make sure people in South Ayrshire are kept up to date on Council news, especially where issues may directly affect them. However, our communications are not just about the day to day running of services - we want residents to feel a civic and community pride in South Ayrshire. Therefore, our communications to local people must highlight the work we are doing to improve local spaces and places and to make South Ayrshire an attractive place to live, work and learn.

We know South Ayrshire is a fantastic destination and are determined to put it on the map – promoting everything this great area has to offer, not just for visitors, but for

people who might choose South Ayrshire as a place to live, visit, work and invest in. Our Communications Strategy therefore has a key focus on selling South Ayrshire as a destination of choice, publicising the wide range of attractions the area has to offer and the events we sponsor, from international events such as The International Ayr Show- Festival of Flight and The 152nd Open at Royal Troon, to local events such as TamFest, the Holy Fair, Carrick Lowland Gathering and Prestfest.

As one of the biggest employers in the area, we want our staff to be ambassadors for South Ayrshire. That means they need to be engaged and up to date with what's happening across Council services, that their successes are celebrated, and they have all the information they need to do their job.

This strategy builds on the significant progress we have made as an organisation to improve our communications, reach and engage with more people and be first to tell our news. I'm proud of what we have achieved so far and confident that we'll see even more progress over the next five years.

Councillor Martin Dowey
Leader of South Ayrshire Council

The Council Plan

In April 2023 we published our [Council Plan 2023 – 2028](#). This plan sets out our goals and objectives for the next five years and is set against three key priorities:

Priority One Spaces and Places



Priority Two Live, Work, Learn



Priority Three Civic and Community Pride



Key Principles

Getting our communications right is key to the day to day running and effectiveness of the Council.

We want our residents, communities, employees, partners, and stakeholders to know:

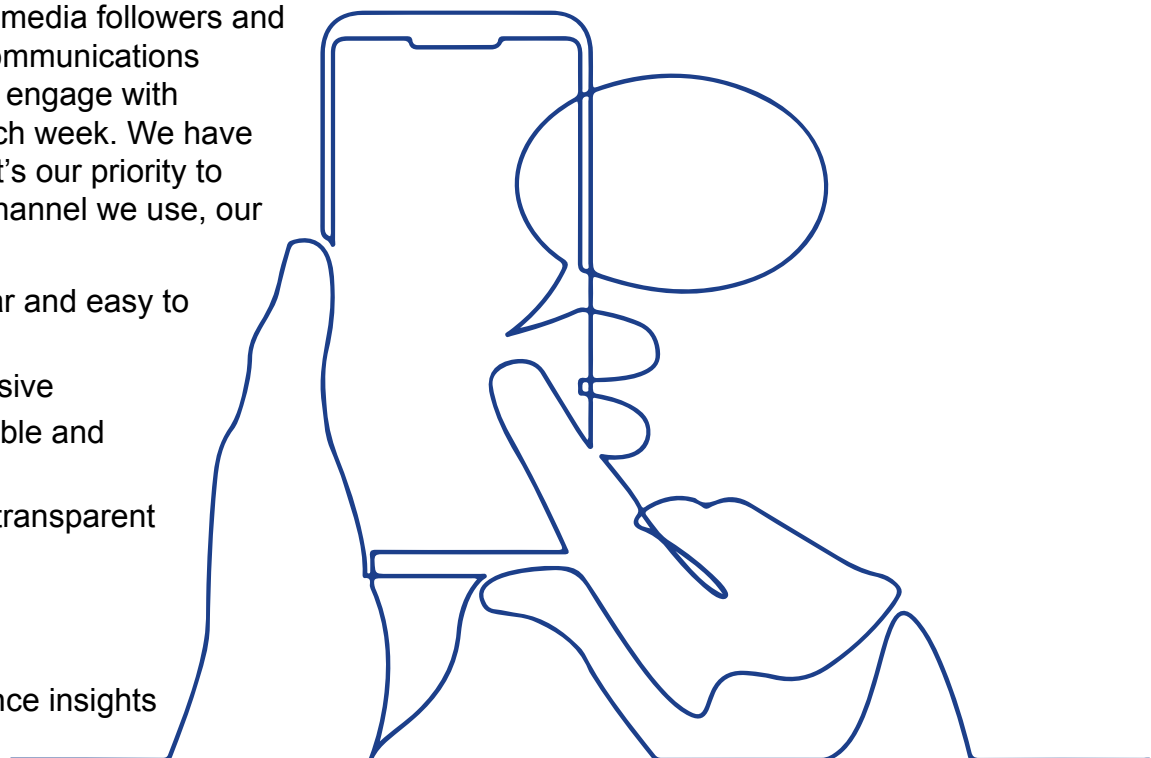
- Who we are – our purpose, vision and values
- What we do – our services, statutory obligations, ambitions and priorities
- How we are delivering for the people of South Ayrshire in line with our Council Plan
- Where and how to access, or engage with our services or the Council
- How we make a difference to our residents and communities
- Why we do what we do and why we are making any changes to the way we work
- When we propose to make changes or decisions that affect people and how they can get involved
- Where our budget comes from and how we use it to fund services and improve local communities
- What South Ayrshire has to offer for local people and visitors and for those who choose to live, work and learn here.



Our Communication Standards

With over 59,000 social media followers and a range of non-digital communications channels, we reach and engage with thousands of people each week. We have a diverse audience, so it's our priority to ensure that, whatever channel we use, our communications are:

- In Plain English, clear and easy to understand
- Accessible and inclusive
- Two-way, approachable and engaging
- Clear, accurate and transparent
- Regular and reliable
- Up to date
- Consistent in style
- Evidence and audience insights based.



Roles and Responsibilities

We are all responsible for the profile and reputation of the Council and all have a part to play in the effective delivery of this strategy.

Elected Members, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Service Leads, employees and partners all have a role to ensure we enhance the profile and reputation of the Council, and South Ayrshire as a whole. How we communicate and engage with residents, customers, stakeholders, colleagues and partners plays a key part in this:

Directors/Assistant Directors

Directors and Assistant Directors should ensure that services within their area of responsibility take a strategic approach to communications, aligning these to the service planning process.

Service Leads

Service Leads must:

- Take a strategic approach to communications about their services, identifying high level communications messages, plans and campaigns on a yearly basis, in line with the service planning process.
- In conjunction with service communications campaigns, provide regular information for the public, staff and Elected Members about the work of their teams, share their good news stories and provide timely information about projects, service delivery or changes.
- Work with the Communications team to ensure that communications campaigns about their service are effectively implemented and evaluated.
- In conjunction with Digital Services, maintain their service's web pages and ensure the content is accurate, up to date and engaging.
- Manage any niche social media accounts administered by their service effectively and in line with agreed media and social media protocols.
- Ensure all written communications issued by their service are clear, written in Plain English and jargon-free e.g. letters/emails to customers.
- Ensure employees in their teams have access to information about what's happening in their team, service and across the Council.



Employees

Employees are encouraged to be effective ambassadors for their team, service, the Council and the local area by keeping themselves up to date with what's happening across the organisation.

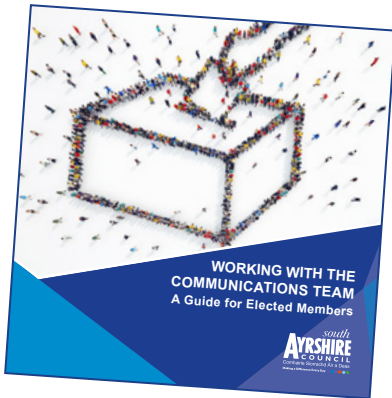
- Employees who can, are encouraged to follow Council updates, and interact and engage with conversations on Viva Engage (SAC Staff Community Hub Yammer page).
- Follow the Council on social media where they can.
- Engage with opportunities to hear about what's happening across the Council.



Elected Members

Elected Members are encouraged to make use of the internal and external communication channels available to them. These include the Elected Member Weekly Information Note; Viva Engage (Yammer); The Core; Elected Member Briefings; and the Council's corporate social media channels.

Members are also encouraged to actively share the Council's messages with their constituents as appropriate.



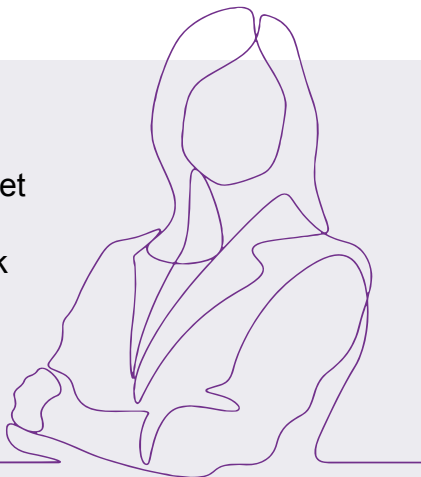
Reading Materials

Members are advised to familiarise themselves with the guidance on communications in [The Councillors' Code of Conduct and Guidance](#) and the requirements of [Local authority publicity: code of practice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

[Working with the Communications Team – A Guide for Elected Members](#) is available for Members to view on the Communications page of the Council's intranet, The Core.

Portfolio Holders

Councillors who hold a Cabinet Portfolio are encouraged to support the promotion of work undertaken by the services within their portfolio area.



Role of the Communications Team

The Communications team will support the delivery of this strategy. The team provides a professional communications, design and media relations service. They:

- Develop, maintain and grow our network of corporate social media channels, monitoring feedback and engagement.
- Support services in the development of communications plans and in developing and promoting engaging content.
- Manage media relations.
- Provide a professional media handling and liaison service.



- Provide a professional in-house design service.
- Coordinate advertising on behalf of services, including developing copy, proofreading and design work.
- Create in-house videos, including scripting, building, editing and voiceover.



- Create and coordinate YouTube, In App and TV advertising, including in-house scripting, voiceover and creation of video/digital adverts and liaising with relevant media organisations.
- Produce quarterly Council magazine and coordinate distribution to a non-digital audience.
- Manage internal communications channels including Viva Engage (Yammer); Elected Member Information Notes and Chief Executive communications.
- Carry out evaluation and analysis including audience insights and campaign evaluations.

Key Achievements

This strategy builds on the work undertaken between 2020-23 to take an audience focused approach to our communications, increasing the number of people we communicate with, the ways in which we reach them and the quality and diversity of our content.

We reached more people than ever before

We:

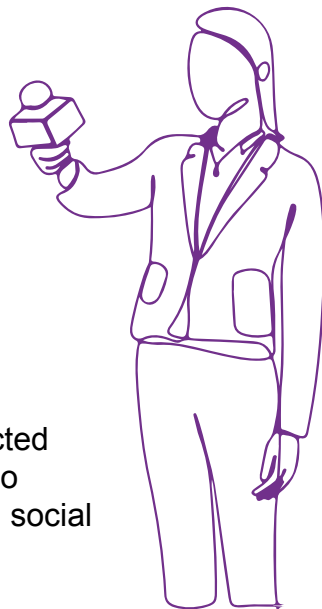
- Significantly increased our social media presence and audience
- Grew our social media followers from 19,148 to 59,804
- Built an average monthly social media engagement of 22,591
- Expanded the number of social media platforms we post on and now regularly use – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, NextDoor and YouTube
- Expanded our non-digital reach by distributing South Ayrshire Council magazines via a range of channels including local supermarkets, libraries and via Care at Home and Sheltered Housing teams and Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA).



We improved internal and employee communications

We:

- Improved the way we communicate with staff and Elected Members with the introduction of Yammer.
- Modernised Chief Executive employee communications and Elected Member Information Notes.
- Enhanced our communications approach by securing professional media training sessions for Elected Members and Chief Officers, and industry expert social media training for Elected Members and staff who operate services' local social media accounts.



We put design at the forefront of communications



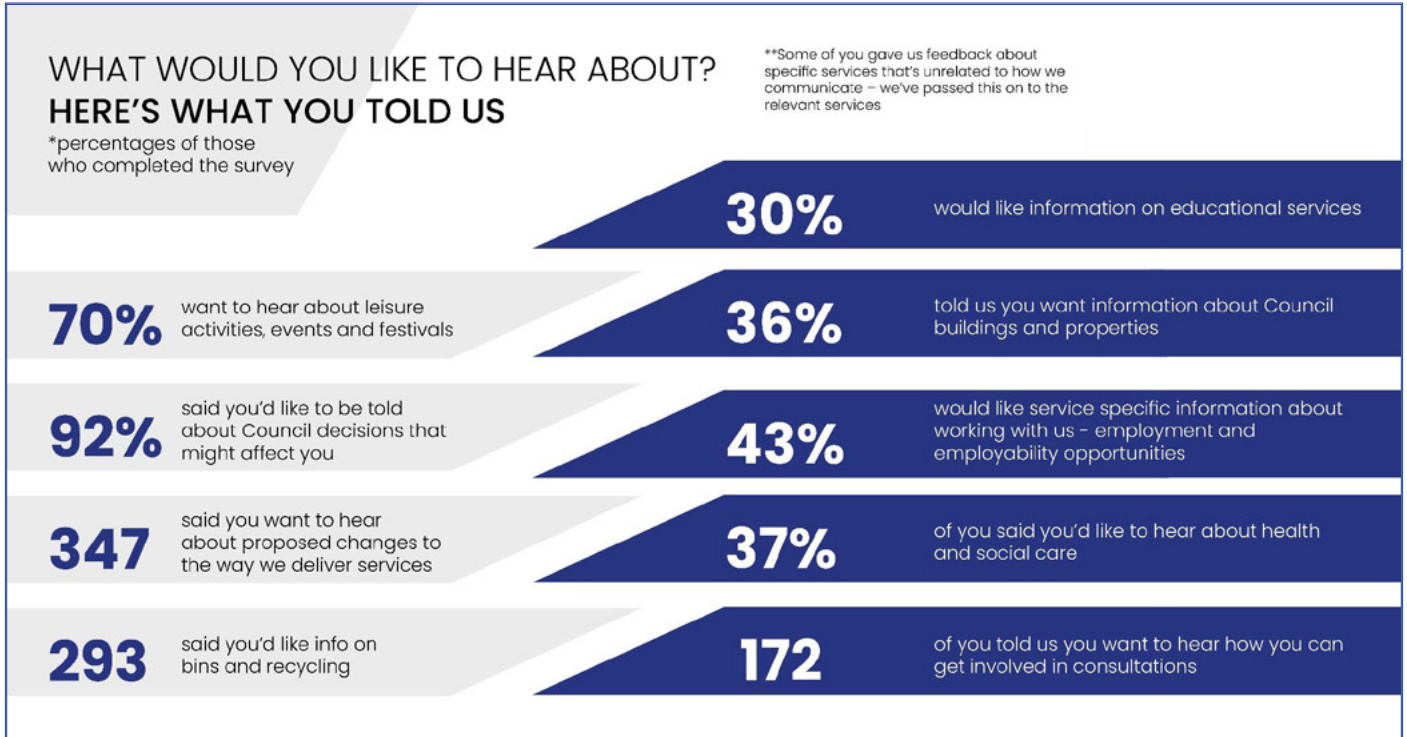
We:

- Streamlined and refreshed corporate branding to better showcase the work we do.
- Significantly increased our digital provision, including video and animation to ensure our communications are engaging.
- Produced and prominently displayed vinyl artwork in key public locations to highlight initiatives, projects and news.

Going Forward

In developing this strategy, we took into account audience insights and analytics on our digital channels, campaign evaluations, and feedback and engagement from customers, services and staff.

Customers said:



Our Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1 – Grow our audience



We have made great strides in building our audience and want to reach even more people going forward.

Social media helps us get our news out, often in real time, to thousands of people every week

The social and digital media landscape is constantly changing. Therefore, it is important that the quality and relevance of our social media engages people, and sustains and builds on the significant progress we have made to grow our digital audience to **over 59,000 followers**

While digital media is a priority in growing our reach and public engagement, we are also committed to reaching people who don't use social media.

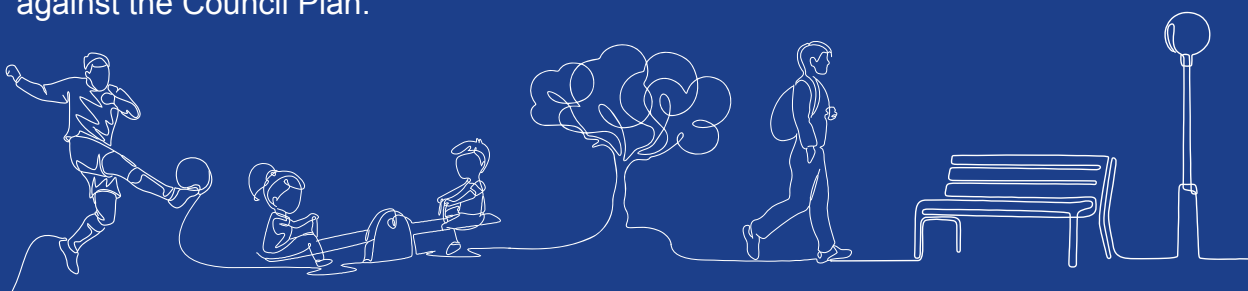
Strategic Goal 2 – Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice

Communications which showcase South Ayrshire and promote the area to residents and visitors are a key strategic priority. We will have a real focus on highlighting local events, activities and attractions which foster a sense of civic and community pride, and which help to attract people to the area.



Strategic Goal 3 – Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

Services play a key role in making sure they are engaging and communicating effectively with the public, sharing news, celebrating successes and highlighting how they are delivering against the Council Plan.



Corporate Action Plan – Delivering this strategy

Strategic Goal 1 - Grow our audience

PRIORITY/AIM 1	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Grow our digital / social media audience across a range of platforms	Increase followers by 10% across corporate social media and digital communication channels.	Communications	Service Leads
	Increase employee engagement on Viva Engage (Yammer).	Communications	Service Leads
	Niche social media account owners to carry out local social media analytics, ensuring effective and engaging use of channels.	Niche social media channel owners	Communications
	Services to review corporate and service web pages to ensure they are up to date; informative and engaging/easy to navigate.	Service Leads	Digital Services
Further develop the use of public facing TVs to reach residents who have limited, or no digital access	Ensure a minimum of 15 different slides showing current Council information and news are displayed at any one time on public facing TVs.	Communications	Services

Strategic Goal 2 - Promote South Ayrshire as a Destination of Choice

PRIORITY / AIM 2	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice	Develop a high-level communications calendar outlining planned coverage of Council sponsored local events.	DSA	Communications
	Expand the use of communication and marketing tools such as in-App and TV advertising to promote South Ayrshire to a wide audience.	Communications	DSA

Strategic Goal 3 - Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

PRIORITY / AIM 3	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.	Communications calendars/ plans are in place for campaigns identified by services that promote their contribution to the Council Plan.	Service Leads	Communications

Appendix 2 - Communications Staffing Proposals– Key Communications Activities

Table 1 below provides a summary of activity carried out by the Communications team by role/ responsibility. The table also highlights where activity has been introduced to the Communications team since the service transferred to OD and Customer Services and provides high level detail of work carried out by officers and assistants.

Table 1

	Communications Activities	Co-ordinator	Officer	Design Officer	Assistant	New
Media	Write and issue press releases – (160 releases issued between 1 March and 30 September 2023)	✓	✓			
	Managing Media Enquiries. This includes liaising with a range of services to obtain information to allow us to prepare suggested responses (an average of 11 media enquiries each week).	✓	✓			
	Press Calls – liaise with services and media outlets to arrange press calls at a range of locations to promote the work and enhance the reputation of the Council.	✓	✓			
	Radio advertising – script, write and develop adverts including providing voice-overs (VO) for use on local radio.	✓	✓	✓	✓	VO provision new.
	Press advertising – Manage council's advertising contract and work with services to develop and design a range of advertising for print press.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop targeted TV, YouTube and In App advertising. Communications Team create, design and provide voiceover, liaising with relevant media organisations to broadcast adverts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
Campaigns	Design, develop and deliver targeted multi-media campaigns to support services to promote initiatives, inform the public and raise the profile and reputation of the council. (101 campaigns delivered or ongoing in 2023 as at October 2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
	Apply and advise services on recognised model (O.A.S.I.S.) for planning campaigns.	✓	✓			New
	Carry out comprehensive campaign evaluations, including data analysis; social media analytics and media monitoring.	✓	✓		✓	New

Social Media Channels and Output	Facebook - Manage corporate Facebook channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team has grown this channel from 0 followers since its introduction in 2019 to over 14,500 as at October 2023)	✓	✓		✓	New
	Twitter – Manage corporate Twitter channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team has grown this channel from 15,581 followers since in 2019 to 19,704 as at October 2023)	✓	✓		✓	Significant increase in output, reach and followers
	LinkedIn – Manage corporate LinkedIn channel creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement (Comms team began management of the corporate LinkedIn account in April 2021). The team has grown this channel from 4096 followers since in 2021 to 5872 as at October 2023	✓	✓		✓	New
	Instagram – Manage corporate Instagram channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement with followers at 1148 as at October 2023.	✓	✓		✓	New
	NextDoor – Manage corporate NextDoor channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team introduced and grew this channel to 17,404 members as at October 2023.)	✓	✓		✓	New
Social Media Monitoring	Significant increase in reach, engagement and followers (total followers on corporate channels = 59,804, which requires daily, ongoing monitoring of comments and feedback across all corporate social media channels). Liaise with services to provide responses to comments where appropriate Provide information to services on social media monitoring regarding their service.	✓	✓		✓	
	Analyse and provide reports on social media data and analytics to support campaign evaluation and continuous growth and improvement of each social media platform.	✓	✓		✓	
Digital	Script, develop and design targeted videos to support campaigns and initiatives.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New

Employee Communications	Create and write Chief Executive's monthly update and South Ayrshire Weekly.	✓	✓		✓	Increase from monthly to weekly
	Yammer –Manage content, feedback and comments received on employee Yammer Channel. Create engaging content and evaluate to continuously increase engagement	✓	✓		✓	
Elected Members	Provide a speechwriting service for the Provost and Depute Provost. Work includes researching a wide range of topics to draft speeches for a variety of civic events.	✓	✓		✓	
	Produce weekly Elected Member Information Note.	✓	✓		✓	
Design	Provide a free, high volume, professional design service for all council services, including design for reports, documents, signage, merchandise and digital communications. (Total design jobs produced 1 January – 12 October 2023 = 140, with a saving to the council of £99,535.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop and provide advice on corporate branding guidance.					
Events	Provide live coverage of pre-agreed corporate events e.g. the Air Show.	✓	✓		✓	New
South Ayrshire Quarterly Magazine	Write, design and co-ordinate the distribution of free quarterly South Ayrshire Council magazine to over 4,000 residents.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
School Media Team	Coordinate and manage school media team to provide communications related work experience for S3-S6 pupils using a range of communications tools.	✓			✓	New
Civil Contingencies out of hours	Provide communications support in relation to civil contingencies as agreed by relevant Gold/Silver Command.	✓	✓			
Public Space TVs	Manage and create content for public facing TVs in each of the five main towns to promote the work of the council, including events and to inform the public.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New

Cabinet – Communications Strategy and Staffing Proposals

Appendix 3 – Communications Team Structure

<p>Substantive Structure (4 FTE)</p>	<p>1 x Coordinator 1 x Design Officer 2 x Communications Officer</p>
<p>Temporary Additional Posts - 21/22 (additional 3 FTE)</p>	<p>3 x Communications Assistants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 funded from temporarily vacant OD post and; • 2 funded for 23 months from central support additional resource requirements agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021.
<p>Temporary Additional Posts - 22/23 (additional 2FTE)</p>	<p>2 x Communications Assistants</p> <p>Temporary funding for these was agreed by ELT on 30 June 2023 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 funded from a temporarily vacant OD post for 12 months (substantive postholder seconded to Ukraine Support Team); • 1 from balance of remaining central support funding agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021 (£29,356). One postholder who had been funded through this arrangement left and ELT agreed to use the balance of funds to extend the remaining assistant (ref: 1083260) funded from this budget from 1 March 2024 until the funding is exhausted (November 2024).

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Appendix 4



Managing Work-related
Social Media
Guidance for Employees

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TO INFORM AND ENGAGE
WITH THE PUBLIC
TO PROMOTE
THE WORK OF
THE COUNCIL

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Managing comments and feedback on social media	Page 9
Reacting to social media posts and comments on Council social media accounts.....	Page 10
Social media – things to remember	Page 13
Training	Page 14
Contact details	Page 14



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Introduction

Social media plays a key role in the way we communicate. We use corporate social media channels to raise the Council's profile, inform and engage with the public, and promote the work we do in line with our purpose, vision and values, and our [Council Plan 2023-28](#).

We want to:

- Continue to grow our social media audience and streamline the number of corporate social media accounts we operate to maximise reach and followers;
- Use social media to engage with a wider, more diverse audience;
- Ensure our social media content is engaging and informative;
- Use social media as a key tool to communicate Council news and give immediate updates on situations as they change;
- Use social media to make it easier for residents and staff to ask questions and give us their feedback, ideas and suggestions;
- Make sure social media guidance is available to Elected Members, managers and employees.

The Council's Communications team manages corporate social media accounts, however this guidance is aimed at those employees who manage or administer service related niche social media accounts.

This guidance supports employees to use social media effectively for work purposes, in line with the Council's [Code of Conduct](#).

This document does not cover personal use of social media. Employees should refer to the Council's Code of Conduct for guidance on the use of personal social media accounts.



About the Council's social media channels

Corporate Social Media

The Communications team operates the Council's main social media platforms:

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#) and [Nextdoor](#)

These channels support the Council and services to get information out to our 59,000+ followers.

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Local accounts

A number of services administer their own local accounts. These can be beneficial where there is a targeted audience e.g. of school pupils, parents, leisure members, and day care residents.

It's important that there is a clear purpose for a local account and that it is administered and monitored regularly. Where services would like to establish a local account, they should complete the [social media request form](#) on The Core in the first instance. A member of the Communications team will be in touch to discuss the case and assess if there is a valid reason to create the account. Accounts should not be set up without prior approval from the Communications team.

It is the local account owner's responsibility to ensure their social media accounts are active and used regularly, and to monitor the effectiveness of their posts using the relevant analytic tools on each social media platform.

Service Leads are responsible for the effective use of niche social media channels within their service area, ensuring access is restricted to those employees who have permission to administer or post on the channel. If your account is approved by the Communications team, it is your responsibility to approach the Digital Services team to request channel set up and to ensure compliance with GDPR and cybersecurity policies at all times in the administering and use of the account.

Service Leads should ensure that social media administrators complete the COAST module on Managing Local Social Media Accounts.

The Communications team will aim to streamline local accounts wherever possible. Some local accounts can lie dormant for some time, have very few followers or little engagement. In these cases, the Communications team will work with the local account owner to establish if there is a clear need for the account and look at alternative options.



Using your local social media accounts

Positive Communication and Engagement using Social Media

If you are an administrator for a local social media account for your service area, it's important that you know what is and isn't appropriate content for your channels, and how to engage your audience.



1. Consider your message – is social media the best channel?
2. Consider the text you use – is it clear, in Plain English, and engaging?
3. Social media is visual – do you have suitable images which would illustrate your posts*?
4. Make your posts engaging – can you use appropriate video or other tools to engage your intended audience?
5. Avoid jargon – make sure your posts are understandable to everyone.
6. Be transparent – give as much accurate information, that's suitable for the public domain, as possible.
7. Use resources – include links to our [website](#), appropriate informative videos, images and text.
8. Share information from other reputable partners as appropriate, for example: Police Scotland, NHS and the Council's employee charity partner. Do not share information from personal social media accounts to Council channels.
9. Use an appropriate tone – you are representing the Council, so always respond in a tone that reflects positively and is appropriate for the channel.
10. Influence – place focus on the most important and influential issues and topics.

Always make sure the image you use is not affected by copyright/the owner of the image is credited. Where possible, take and use your own good quality images. It's also extremely important that you have the correct permissions and privacy notices in place when using images of people (the Information Governance team will be able to assist you with any queries you have about this).

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What not to do:

1. You should never post, repost or share social media that is of a political nature or could damage the reputation of the Council.
2. You should never repost or share any content of a political nature; images and/or quotes from Elected Members during a pre-election period**.
3. If you're in any doubt at all – don't post it. Please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

**Pre-election guidance is made available on the [Elections and Voting page](#) of our website 6-8 weeks prior to any local, Scottish Parliament or General Elections.



Engaging with your audience

Social media is a two-way communication tool, so remember to like and respond to positive comments. Use emojis where appropriate.

Make sure the language you use is engaging.

Managing comments and feedback on social media

If you are an administrator for a local social media account for your service area, it's really important that you ensure that the page is regularly monitored, and appropriate responses are sought to any relevant comments or questions from the appropriate service/manager in good time.

For example: If someone asks: "How do I make an appointment to visit Girvan Household Waste Recycling Centre today?", getting back to them the following day is no good. Social media is instant – people expect quick, accurate responses.

Sometimes it's not always possible to get the answer to more complex questions straight away. In these cases, it's appropriate to respond to the person so that they know that you are dealing with their question for example: "Thanks for getting in touch, we're looking into this for you and we'll come back to you as soon as possible."

Some people may try to use the Council's social media channels as a means to complain about a service or general issue. In these instances you should respond by directing them to the Council's complaints procedure '[Listening to You](#)'.



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Reacting to social media posts and comments on Council social media accounts

If you are a social media user, you may well come across posts or comments about, or directed to, the Council or a particular service area or employee.

Positive Posts

If you administer a local account and find a post online about your service area, or the Council in general, there are several things you need to consider before taking any action.

If the post is positive, you can do one, or a combination of the following:

- Let the post stand and take no further action;
- Like the post;
- Share the post where appropriate;
- Provide a positive response where appropriate.

If you are unsure, don't engage with it. If you need advice, contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk



Negative Posts

Sometimes people use social media to disagree with a Council decision or to make negative comments about the Council or particular services. While people have the right to comment, there are steps you should take where comment becomes offensive.

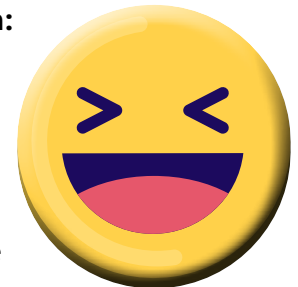


Offensive Posts/Comments:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels and is offensive, degrading of others, or contains foul language, do not respond. You should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
- If the post is on an external site and is offensive, degrading of others, or contains foul language, do not respond. You should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk who will monitor the site and take action as appropriate.

Posts/comments that ridicule or make a joke of a person, or defame a person:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk. In some cases, advice will be sought from Legal Services.
- If the post is on an external site, it can be very difficult to have it removed. You should, however, report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk. In some situations, advice will be sought from Legal Services.



If you are concerned about any comments or trends on any of the Council's social media channels, please contact the Communications team.

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Posts/comments that are incorrect or include misinformation about the Council:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels, and you are in a position to correct the post with accurate information, you can do so. Your response should always remain courteous, and you should not get into a full conversation with the customer. You should only correct the misinformation and direct to accurate information e.g. on the Council's website.
- If the post is on an external site, you should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk who will monitor the site and take action as appropriate.



If in any doubt, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk in the first instance.



Social media – things to remember

Here are some of the top things to remember when using work or personal social and digital media channels:

- Use common sense;
- Follow any local sign off arrangements in place within your service before posting;
- Once it's gone, it's gone - remember anything you post could be permanent;
- It's not private – anyone can see what you post;
- Remember to stick to the Code of Conduct – don't post anything which would compromise the reputation of the Council whether acting in an official or personal capacity;
- If in doubt, don't post it;
- Check the accuracy and sensitivity of the content you are posting before pressing submit;
- Be aware of the tone you use, make sure it's suitable for your target audience and it's not patronising or abrupt;
- Use filters to ensure comments on your page don't appear if they contain any offensive or inappropriate language or phrases.

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Training

If you would like advice on sourcing social media training for your service, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Contact details

If you have a query please email communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk or phone **0300 123 0900** (Monday - Thursday, 8.45am – 4.45pm and Friday, 8.45am - 4.00pm).

Please note that our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7 (including evenings, weekends and public holidays).

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Appendix 5



Media Relations Guidance

www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk

south
AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO THE SUCCESSFUL DAY TO DAY RUNNING OF THE COUNCIL

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Introduction

This document outlines the protocols to be followed by South Ayrshire Council employees and Elected Members when dealing with the media. It provides direction and guidance on how to work with the media to help enhance and protect the reputation of the Council.

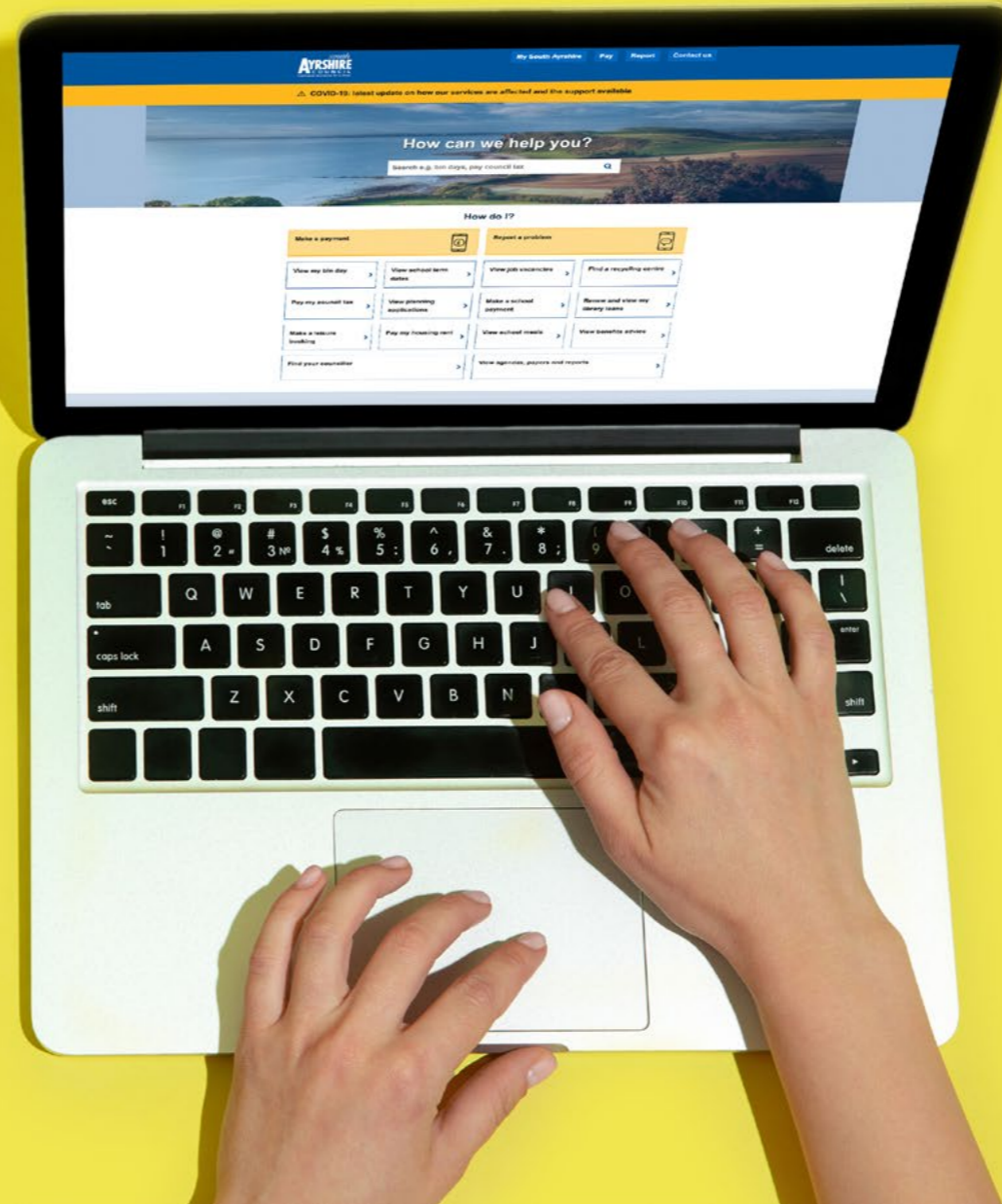
The guidance relates to Council activities only and applies to all staff and Elected Members when speaking on behalf of the Council, and to Elected Members who represent the Council on partnership organisations.

It also gives media personnel an indication of the service they can expect to receive from the Council.

Effective communication is key to the successful day to day running of the Council. It's therefore important that we regularly engage with residents; communities; partners; and employees to share our messages, promote our services and achievements, and raise the profile of the Council, in line with the [Council Plan 2023-28](#).

South Ayrshire Council has a range of communication channels which take priority when issuing messaging. This ensures residents who choose to engage with us receive information and updates direct from the Council, rather than a third-party source.

We understand the value the media brings in helping us to get our messages out to as wide an audience as possible. We are therefore committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with professional and accredited media organisations, and work in conjunction with them to supplement our own communication channels.



To ensure accuracy and consistency when dealing with the media, the Communications team co-ordinate media relations of behalf of the Council.

Our key aims in providing a media relations service are to:

- Proactively promote the Council and the services we provide, and enhance our reputation in local and national print; online; social media; radio and TV;
- Provide robust and prompt responses to media enquiries;
- Provide the media with timely, accurate information that is consistent in style and appropriate for the target audience;
- Respond quickly to any media inaccuracies about our services;
- Maintain effective working relationships with media personnel from all sectors.

Legal Context

Legislation exists which governs the publicity activities of local authorities. Under [Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986](#), it states that a local authority shall not “publish or assist others to publish material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.”

All publicity the Council produces, including press releases and statements issued to the media, should comply with the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity](#).

Local authorities have an obligation to observe the Code prior to issuing any publicity. The Code’s key message is that publicity is a corporate function and should therefore reflect the Council’s views at all times. This means that it’s generally inappropriate to publicise individual Councillors, unless they are acting on behalf of the Council as a whole. Further information relating to the powers, duties and publication of information for local authorities in Scotland is available to view on the [Scottish Government Website](#).

Dealing with the Media

Media Enquiries - Services and Employees

All media enquiries are handled by the Communications team. The Communications team work with the appropriate Service Lead(s) and/or Chief Officer to agree an accurate, timeous response to any enquiries.

We work on the principle that information that can be released, will be released.

While it’s not always possible to meet media deadlines, we will acknowledge receipt of an enquiry and aim to provide a response as soon as possible. The sooner a response is provided, the more likely it is to form part of the media story and therefore, reflect the Council’s position/view on the matter.

As stated within the Council’s [Code of Conduct for Employees](#), “in an employee’s work with the Council, contact with the media must only take place where this has been authorised by a Head of Service or other designated Senior Officer. Employees who become aware of an issue that potentially will be of media interest must notify their line manager, who in turn must alert the Communications team.”

If you are approached directly by the media, either verbally or digitally, you should immediately refer the enquiry to the Communications team - this applies to all requests for interviews. Ideally, please ask them to send their enquiry to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk, alternatively they can phone 0300 123 0900 to speak to a Communications Officer.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities regarding media enquiries.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the service or services as soon as a press enquiry is received. • Provide advice and guidance on wording of response and any other communications suggested related to the press enquiry. • Liaise with journalists for clarification. • Issue agreed response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accurate and timely information by way of response. • Sign off on agreed response. • Follow the media guidance at all times. Services should not liaise directly with the press or media. All enquiries should be directed to the Communications team.

All media enquiries received must be referred to Communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Proactive Media – Press Releases

All proactive press releases are handled by the Communications team. Proactive releases allow us to invite the media to share our news, highlighting public awareness of Council decision making, events, and service changes.

Each message is only as good as the information provided to create it. The Communications team relies on services to provide accurate information for all pro-active messages to be released to the media, and services will be asked to sign-off on any final communications prior to issue.

The majority of press releases will include an appropriate quote from the relevant Portfolio Holder (with the exception of a pre-election period when the quote would be attributed to the Chief Executive or the relevant Director/Assistant Director/Service Lead).

For announcements relating to Civic matters, the Provost, or nominated representative, should be quoted.

In all cases, the quote will be approved by the person being quoted prior to issue. Where this is not possible within the required timescales, the quote should be cleared by the Leader of the Council, the Depute Leader or relevant Chief Officer.

All press releases are circulated to Elected Members upon issue and are uploaded to our [website](#).

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft press release (and any associated social media posts etc.) based on key summary information from service. • Draft and agree Portfolio Holder (PFH) quotes with the relevant PFH as necessary. • Following service sign off, issue press release and add to Council website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you contact the Communications team at the earliest opportunity to request a press release. You should give at least 10 working days’ notice, unless it’s related to an emergency or unanticipated situation. • Provide summary information on key message to the Communications team, ensuring as much notice as possible. • Agree and sign off on final press release and any other related communications. • Supply a suitable image (at least 300kb in quality) and ensure all necessary permissions are in place to allow the image to be used on agreed communication channels.

Joint Press Releases

There are occasions where we will work with partner agencies to create and issue joint press releases. In these instances, one partner will generally take the lead on writing the release and circulating as appropriate for sign-off. It’s common practice for each organisation to supply a suitable quote.

Joint press releases will be released by the agreed lead organisation, unless they have limited channels for distribution, e.g. they only have the capability to distribute to niche publications as opposed to all local/national press.



Holding Statements

Service Leads/managers should make the Communications team aware, as soon as possible, of any potential issues within their service that could raise media interest.

In most cases, if no proactive communications are planned, a holding statement should be drafted and approved in advance as a response to any media enquiries.

The service should supply the Communications team with the relevant background information/detail of potential issue/enquiry to allow the statement to be drafted. All holding statements must be signed off by the relevant Service Lead/Chief Officer. In some cases, the holding statement may require to be signed off by various others e.g. the Chief Executive/Leader of the Council.

Even where a holding statement has been agreed, in all cases, the Communications team will notify the service of any media enquiries prior to a response being issued.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft holding statement based on key summary information from service. • Make service aware of any media enquiry and seek approval to issue holding statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Communications team aware of any potential issue that could raise media interest. • Provide background/summary information on key message for suggested response to Communications team, ensuring as much notice as possible. • Agree and sign off on final holding statement. • Confirm holding statement is still accurate and can be issued/revise holding statement accordingly prior to issue.

Media Releases following Council Meetings

It's important that the media are kept informed of Council decisions to allow them to help us get this information to the public.

Service Leads, or the appropriate manager, should contact the Communications team prior to Council meetings to advise of any communications requirements. This should be done at the same time the paper is submitted at Pre-ELT clearance stage via the [Communications Request Form](#).

Council Meetings are live-streamed. This means that it is important that any media releases coincide with the date of the panel. Where possible, any communications about Council decisions should be drafted and signed-off in advance to allow timely release if papers are approved.

Media releases are normally issued on the day of the panel meeting, and in some cases, as soon as the decision is made. Decisions that are subject to call in will be highlighted as such in any communications.

Information on Council or Panel discussions from which the public have been excluded cannot be disclosed to the media unless authorised by the Council or Cabinet, or the information has been made available under section 50B of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft press release (and any associated social media posts etc.) based on key summary information from service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Lead or appropriate manager to contact the Communications team at time of submitting panel paper at pre-ELT clearance stage to advise of any communication requirements. • Service Lead or appropriate manager to provide summary information on key message. • Service Lead or appropriate manager to sign-off on all communications prior to issue and prior to the date of the panel meeting.

Media Interaction with Elected Members

Elected Members who are approached directly by the media for an official Council comment should consult with the Communications team prior to any response being issued. The Communications team will, where appropriate, liaise with the relevant service to gain information in order to provide support and guidance on the best way to respond.

The Communications team will refer any media enquiries that are deemed political to the Leader of the Council for a decision on whether the administration would like to respond politically. In line with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, the Communications team cannot provide support to issue political statements or press releases.

Elected Members can decide to engage directly with the media. In such cases, any comments, quotes or information provided by the Elected Member is deemed as their view and cannot be attributed to the Council.

Publicity ahead of Elections

When a Notice of Election is called, strict guidelines in relation to any publicity and media activity undertaken by the Council apply from then, until the day of the election.

The restrictions are set out in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity: “The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members.”

During an election period, proactive press releases and reactive media statements will include quotes from the relevant Chief Officer. No quotes from, or photographs of, Elected Members can be issued on behalf of the Council during this time.

Further information can be found in the Pre-Election Period Guidance document which is uploaded to the [elections and voting page](#) of our website around 6 – 8 weeks prior to any local, Scottish or UK Parliament Election.

Press Calls

There are occasions where we actively encourage the media to attend specific events to allow them to take photographs/conduct interviews with officers and/or Elected Members. These can include things like changes or additions to a service, such as the opening of a new Council building or events e.g. The International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight.

In most scenarios, press calls will be issued to all local press, however, there are occasions where only specific press outlets would be invited e.g. where radio coverage only is desired.

Services can request press/media calls via the Comumunications team by using the online [request form](#).



Photography

Images can really help to enhance any communications and better engage the audience. It's highly recommended that all media releases are accompanied by at least one good quality image.

The Communications team can help services to book a photographer to take images for a range of things including: events; presentations; good news stories/Council achievements; bank photography. The cost for commissioning any photography will, in most cases, be met by the service making the request.

There are some occasions where a member of the Communications team will take photographs to be used for promotional purposes for the Council.



Photocalls – who to invite

The Communications team can provide advice to services when arranging photocalls. Services are responsible for agreeing in writing (email) with the relevant Director/Assistant Director who should be invited to photocalls (including Elected Members, Chief Officers and partners).

Services are responsible for issuing all invites to photocalls.

Services should draft an appropriate brief for the photographer to ensure they know which images to capture at the photoshoot.

Services should send a representative from their team to attend the photocall.

When photocalls are organised by a service or directorate, it's important that the service commissioning the photography ensures the appropriate officers, Elected Members and partners are invited as outlined below.

IMPORTANT: If the correct invites are not issued for a photocall, the Communications team may not be able to issue the image on behalf of the Council.



Impartiality

All Council publicity and communication material must be neutral and impartial. All participants in Council photocalls should be asked to remove any items they have on display such as, emblems or badges that are deemed political, or might otherwise express an opinion that could compromise our impartiality.

If there's any doubt about whether a particular item could be problematic if it was displayed in a Council photograph, Elected Members or the service commissioning the photography, should seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer.

In cases where a photograph is taken that shows a participant wearing an item that compromises impartiality, and no other photo of the event is available for use, the Communications team will attempt to airbrush the item out prior to releasing the image. If this occurs, the service commissioning the photography is responsible for making the individual it affects aware of this.



Copyright

When external photographers are commissioned, the copyright stays with the photographer. However, the Council will ensure it has the freedom to use the images as required e.g. in Council publications such as reports; for issue to the media; for use on our website/intranet; in our quarterly magazine; and in any other publicity material used to promote the Council and our services.

The copyright for photographs taken by any member of the Communications team rests with the Council.

Copies of photographs commissioned directly by services to be used in conjunction with media releases should be submitted, with captions, to Communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Consent

In all cases, images of people can only be used if the required consents and privacy notices are in place. The Communications privacy notice is available to view on our [website](#). Images without the necessary consents cannot be used in conjunction with any communications (internal or external). More information on consent and privacy notices can be obtained by contacting a member of the Information and Governance team.



IMPORTANT NOTE: It is the responsibility of the service who commissions the photography to ensure all appropriate consents and privacy notices are in place prior to the session commencing. Failure to do so may mean that some or all of your images cannot be used. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Information Governance team in the first instance.

Broadcast Media

The Communications team receives regular requests from both TV and radio media outlets. These range from filming on location in South Ayrshire for advertisements, TV shows and movies, to radio interview requests.

All broadcasting requests are handled by the Communications team. If you are approached directly by the media, either verbally or digitally, you should not attempt to deal with any requests at service level - always refer the media to the Communications team. Ideally, please ask them to send their request to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk, alternatively they can phone 0300 123 0900 to speak to a Communications Officer.

The Communications team will help to facilitate any broadcast media requests and will work with the relevant service(s) to ensure the Council and the local area is reflected in the best light possible. For example, on receipt of a request to film on one of our beaches, the Communications team would contact the Neighbourhood Services team to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-presented. On receipt of a request to interview a Council representative regarding a Council matter, the Communications team would make the relevant service(s) aware and arrange for the appropriate Portfolio Holder/Leader of the Council/member of CLT to be available at a mutually suitable time.

The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council must be informed prior to any filming/interviewing taking place for news bulletin items; large-scale productions including films, TV shows and advertisements; and filming that could have an impact on the Council's reputation.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify relevant service(s) of the broadcasting request. • Liaise with media/interviewee to arrange mutually suitable time for both parties. • Make Chief Executive/Leader of the Council aware of filming/interviewing taking place as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check proposed site for filming is suitable, clean and tidy. • Provide the Communications team with any necessary information for interviewee.



Civil Contingencies Media

The media can play a key role in helping to disseminate information in times of crises. In cases of civil emergencies, the Communications team will work with services/Gold/Silver Group to agree any appropriate media messages.

In cases of civil emergencies, the Communications team will issue any appropriate information to allow media to aid distribution of key and important messages.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities in cases of media coverage around civil emergencies:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with service or Gold/Silver Group to agree key media messages and corporate communications approach e.g. press releases; drafting and issuing of corporate communications using a range of media; media handling; sign off arrangements etc. Provide advice and guidance on targeted media messaging developed by the relevant service or group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact the Communications team to advise of emerging situations. Provide key and brief details/information. Agree key media messages and approach. Consider any further media messaging required. Sign off on agreed media releases.

Media Coverage

The Communications team monitors local media coverage relating to the Council and can provide advice and support on how to respond to inaccuracies in reported information.

Any concerns regarding media inaccuracies should be highlighted to the Communications team.

Advertising

Services often place advertisements across a range of different media outlets e.g. print; radio; television and social media. In all cases advertising requests should be submitted via Advertising@south-ayrshire.gov.uk to ensure best value and consistency of the Council brand at all times.

In-house design advice and support can also be provided for advertisements, however, at least four weeks' notice is required for any requests for design work.

Contact Details

If you have a query regarding press or media, please email communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk or phone 0300 123 0900 (Monday - Thursday, 8.45am – 4.45pm and Friday, 8.45am - 4.00pm).

If you have an emergency civil contingencies enquiry regarding press or media, outwith normal working hours, please contact our Emergency Response Team on 0300 123 0900.

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Making a Difference Every Day

**South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty**

Section One: Policy Details*

Name of Policy	Communications Strategy
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Gillian Farrell, Service Lead, OD and Customer Services
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Sara Burdon – Coordinator - Communicatios

*The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main aims of the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To increase and grow our audience ensuring communication reach a wide and diverse range of people in our communities. ▪ To promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice using a range of communication methods; ▪ To align communications to the service planning process.
What are the intended outcomes of the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More people can access communications about the council and South Ayrshire events and attractions in a range of digital and non-digital ways; ▪ Service Leads align communications plans and campaigns to the service planning process, highlighting those which drive the Council Plan

Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?

Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or particular groups within the population? (please specify)	Strategy is aimed at the whole population
---	---

Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?

List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.

Protected Characteristics	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Age: Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people	The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council's printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience.
Disability: Issues relating to disabled people	As above. Accessibility checks are carried out on communications which are produced and communications can be made available in a range of formats.
Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender: Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex	No anticipated impact.
Marriage and Civil Partnership: Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership	No anticipated impact.
Pregnancy and Maternity: Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave	No anticipated impact.
Race: Issues relating to people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers	The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council's printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience. Communications can be made available in a range of languages on request.
Religion or Belief: Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	No anticipated impact.
Sex: Gender identity: Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	No anticipated impact
Sexual Orientation: Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, heterosexual/straight	No anticipated impact.

Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Health Issues and impacts affecting people's health	No anticipated impact
Human Rights: Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.	No anticipated impact

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty: Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.	No anticipated impact.
Low and/or no wealth: Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	No anticipated impact.
Material Deprivation: Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	No anticipated impact.
Area Deprivation: Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	No anticipated impact.

Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

Involvement and Consultation In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? Who did you involve, when and how ?	Public survey on communications provided high level information on how people get information about the council and how they want to hear about council news and information; Feedback from campaign evaluations – all campaigns are evaluated for effectiveness; audience reach and engagement.
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	Social media analytics regularly reviewed and provide information on audience profile.
Data and Research In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please specify what research was carried out or data collected, when and how this was done.	As above
Partners data and research In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners? Please specify partners	n/a
Gaps and Uncertainties Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?	n/a

Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:

- a) evidence and
- b) to mitigate negative impacts

No.	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
	None identified		

Note: Please add more rows as required.

Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	December 2023
When will the policy be reviewed?	May 2028
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	XXXX

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Section 6

South Ayrshire Council

Appendix

Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

Name of Policy: Communications Strategy

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council’s ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

<p>Eliminate discrimination</p> <p>The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council’s printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)</p> <p>The strategy provides free, accessible communications about the work of the council in a range of ways.</p>

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale
None identified	

Signed: Gillian FarrellService Lead

Date: 12th October 20283