

# EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

## 2015 - 2019



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## Foreword

Key priorities identified in our Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 are citizen engagement and social inclusion. These priorities are underpinned by our core values including accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and accessibility. The development and publication of this communications strategy relates to this corporate commitment and to the fundamental functioning of this organisation as a public service.

We have a diverse audience and range of stakeholders with whom we need to communicate, engage and consult. These include our citizens generally, the political system, our neighbours, visitors to our county, regulators, government agencies and departments, advocacy groups, voluntary organisations, media commentators, suppliers, employees, tenants and direct recipients of services. Political representation and public service provision require ongoing regular, effective and meaningful engagement both of a consultative and communicative nature. The information we provide will not be the only source of information or commentary on our operations which is why there is a need for it to be credible, consistent and relevant to its audience. Failure on our part to achieve this may give rise to lack of public confidence and if uncorrected, reputational damage.

The communications landscape has become very complex with an ever increasing range of communication channels available through social media. Conscious of the need for social inclusion we will also use traditional means of communicating including public meetings, radio and news media, public participatory networks and public notice boards in our community centre network. We will also use the full range of social media, including Twitter, Facebook, webmail, internet and YouTube.

We hope that through active communication and engagement we can effectively inform citizens and generate a better understanding of what we do, cannot do and why. We encourage all interested parties to share their views with us through the many feedback opportunities provided and hope that collectively we will deliver the best possible range of services for our citizens.



*Sarah Holland*

Councillor Sarah Holland  
Mayor of South Dublin County



*[Signature]*

Daniel McLoughlin  
Chief Executive

## Purpose and Values

This communications strategy has been developed to support the delivery of South Dublin County Council's mission:

*'To make our county the best possible place  
in which to live, work and do business.'*

Through working collectively with staff, elected members, partners and local communities this communications plan aims to achieve the following objectives:

### Objective 1

Promote South Dublin's assets and strengths to key target audiences

### Objective 2

Engage and consult with citizens, local communities and other stakeholders on the development of policies and plans

### Objective 3

Build the confidence of our citizens, service users and rate / tax payers in the quality of services provided by giving comprehensive, reliable and timely information on our range of services and programmes

### Objective 4

Develop educational campaigns to raise awareness on issues and seek behavioural change where required

### Objective 5

Organise and host events and civic receptions to recognise volunteerism and civic responsibility

Our core values listed below will inform the delivery of our corporate objectives:

### Value for Money

We will use the simplest and most efficient way to communicate with our target audiences. We will monitor our profile in the media and online communications through feedback surveys with citizens and businesses in the county to ensure our communications are effective.

### Accountability and Transparency

Publications such as the Annual Service Delivery Plan and Annual Budget, followed with the Annual Report and Annual Financial Statement will set out planned and actual services and expenditure each year. These will be supplemented with the distribution of newsletters and informational leaflets to households, schools and communities across the county throughout the year.

## Quality Service

Our communications will be relevant, timely and reliable and will work to build customer satisfaction and confidence. We operate a citizen's charter including a complaints and redress system to underpin this commitment. Regular customer feedback and citizen surveys will help us identify where we can improve.

## Sustainability

As well as effectively communicating progress on our achievements our communications will be informed by knowledge of the issues facing citizens and businesses in South Dublin and this knowledge will improve our responsiveness to public needs.

## Inclusiveness, Equality and Accessibility

In all communications we will try hard to ensure that the language used is simple and clear and that the formats used are inclusive and accessible to all.

## Innovation, Creativity and Diversity

To deliver this strategy, individual and tailor-made Communications Plans will be developed on the issues and initiatives that we want to promote. Each campaign will feature digital marketing and / or traditional methods as appropriate. All will be designed through the creative and innovative use of a diverse range of PR tools available in an increasingly connected world. These values underpin and inform the what, how and why of this communications strategy.

## Communication Messages

The work of the Council is organised under five main areas each with objectives and supporting strategies. This structure frames the main programme and service delivery areas operated by the council, and will inform the core messages on which this communications strategy is based:

### Economic, Enterprise and Tourism

Promotion of the Council's direct and indirect supports for job creation and business development as well as marketing the county's strategic location and other assets to wider audiences to attract tourism and investment.

### Land Use, Planning and Transportation

Education, information, consultation and engagement with the public on often complex issues considered by the council in managing sustainable development towards thriving villages with connected, safe communities and promoting all modes of transport.

### Housing, Social and Community Development

Promotion, information and engagement with all our stakeholders on how we are working to address the county's housing and social needs within inclusive and healthy communities.

## Environment, Water and Climate Change

Promotion, education and engagement on everyone's role in the overall presentation and sustainability of the county for the general health and well-being of all of its current and future inhabitants.

## Organisational Capacity and Accountability

Build public trust and confidence in our ability to address their needs in an efficient, fair, open and transparent way and to support local democracy.

## Target Audiences

Individual campaigns can have a unique mix of target audiences so the design of each communications plan under this strategy will select the most appropriate tools in order to reach those audiences most effectively. Our audiences are also our stakeholders and include but are not limited to:

- Service Users
- Citizens and local communities
- Voluntary organisations and advocacy groups
- Local Businesses and Employers, as well as potential businesses and investors
- Suppliers and potential suppliers
- Elected Members and council employees
- Members of our representative and policy making structures for example Strategic Policy Committees (SPC), Public Participation Network (PPN), Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Comhairle na nÓg
- Print, Broadcast and Social Media
- Government and Oireachtas members
- Other public service providers such as An Garda Síochána, HSE, Department of Social Protection, Department of Education, Education and Training Board
- Other Local Authorities, the Regional Assembly and our parent department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- National development agencies such as the IDA, Failte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland

## Communications Tools

Individual campaigns will feature a mix of digital marketing and traditional methods as appropriate. All will be designed through the creative and innovative use of a diverse range of PR tools available in an increasingly connected world. These tools include:

- Digital and Social Media (in line with our Social Media Policy)
- Public meetings
- Corporate Publications
- Press and Broadcasting Media
- PR and Event Management for example Launches, Civic Receptions, Conferences
- Advertising Campaigns
- Newsletters, Leaflets and Posters
- Statutory and non-statutory Consultation processes
- Citizen Surveys and Panels
- Promotional or educational videos for online use or in public meetings
- Public Information Displays and Notice Boards in Civic Buildings, Libraries, local Community and Leisure Centres
- Internal Communications Network

## Individual Communications Plans

Individual Communications Plans will be designed to cater for the specific needs of each campaign, using the right mix of the tools to reach the particular audience(s) concerned. Taken from the actions identified in our Corporate Plan, the actions and initiatives below further demonstrate how the objectives of this communications strategy will be achieved. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and may change over the five year period of this plan.

### Objective 1

Promote South Dublin's assets and strengths to key target audiences by marketing and developing promotional campaigns for:

- The range of business and enterprise support services available through the Local Enterprise Office and delivery of the County Jobs Strategy
- The investment and improvements in our local villages through the Villages Renewal Programme
- The promotion of the county as a place to live, work and do business
- South Dublin's Tourism assets in line with the Tourism Strategy
- Grange Castle International Business Park as a strategic location of choice in Dublin
- A Signage strategy across the county
- A Branding strategy for all Council provided facilities
- The County's range of arts, sports, community, libraries and heritage infrastructure and facilities and their role in enhancing quality of life and local communities
- The Community grants programme
- The River Dodder Valley Greenway Project
- Playground/Play space provision and expansion program
- Roundabout sponsorship scheme
- Use of online services for example planning applications

### Objective 2

Engage and consult with citizens, local communities and other stakeholders on the development of policies and plans including:

- Ongoing delivery of the Social Housing Strategy 2020 and the Regional Homelessness Strategy
- Integration and Social Inclusion Strategies
- Formal Consultations on policies in development for example County Development Plan, the County Biodiversity Plan and County Heritage Plan
- Citizens' Panel on Quality of Life and service delivery issues
- Development of an on-line Consultation Hub - Citizen Space
- Initiatives and policies developed by the Council's six Strategic Policy Committees
- The Public Participation Network
- Local Community Development Committee and its six-year Local Economic and Community Plan
- South Dublin County Disability Advisory and Consultative Panel

### **Objective 3**

Build the confidence of our citizens, service users and rate / tax payers in the quality of services provided by giving comprehensive, reliable and timely information on our range of services and programmes including:

- Corporate publications such as the Annual Budget, Annual Service Delivery Plan, Annual Financial Statement and Annual Report
- Monthly Management Report to Council on progress under the Annual Service Delivery Plan, including key performance statistics
- South Dublin's performance related to the performance of other local authorities in the Annual National Service Indicators Report
- South Dublin County Today – Twice annual Citizen Newsletter
- Summary of the Annual Service Delivery Plan delivered to every household, school and business in the county

### **Objective 4**

Develop educational campaigns to raise awareness on issues and seek behavioural change where required for:

- Use of alternative Transport modes
- Road Safety
- Community Safety
- Health and Well-being
- Sports Programme and Active Lifestyles
- Water Conservation
- Green Schools Programme
- Environmental Education and Awareness Programmes
- Voter Registration
- Energy Efficiencies
- Enforcement activity for example litter management, treatment of animals and building standards

### **Objective 5**

Organise and host Events, Festivals and Civic Receptions to recognise volunteerism and civic responsibility including:

- Launches and official opening ceremonies
- Sports, arts and cultural events and festivals
- Local community and schools activities
- Pride of place initiatives like Tidy Towns, Local Festivals and Community Initiative Projects
- Endeavour Awards Scheme
- Annual Festivals and promotional weeks including Bealtaine, Social Inclusion Week, Health and Well-being, National Accessibility Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge and Pride



## **Corporate Events Calendar**

This Communications Strategy sets out the Why, What, Who and How of our communications efforts. The Corporate Events Calendar will set out the When and Where of the individual events and campaigns. This will be available on our website [www.sdcc.ie](http://www.sdcc.ie) and will list all the events and campaigns that are due to take place in that year in the County.

## **Corporate Brand**

The corporate brand promotes a visible link between the council and the services and facilities it provides, and a strong brand is essential to improve satisfaction, build relationships and trust with residents and to help people understand what services the council provides. Use of the corporate branding guidelines is required across all publications, online communications, events, facilities and signage to ensure consistency in use of the brand.

## **Irish Language**

Under the Official Language Act 2003 South Dublin County Council recognises that our customers and the public have the right to choose their preferred language and that they will be facilitated in their dealings with us, whether through English or through Irish. One of the main objectives of the Council's Irish Language Scheme is to ensure higher standard of public services are made available through the Irish Language as the national language and the first official language of the County. Regular Irish language programmes and initiatives will be run for staff to develop our confidence and ability in speaking the language.

## **Crisis Communications**

Effective communication with the public and the media is vital to the successful handling of crisis communications / emergencies. The council provides on going training and resources to staff as outlined in the Major Emergency Inter-Agency Media Plan for the Eastern Region. The main objective of the plan is to deliver accurate, clear and timely advice to the public and the media, so that our citizens can feel confident, safe and well informed during a crisis.

## **Evaluation and Monitoring**

The effectiveness of this strategy will be evaluated on a regular basis through the use of media monitoring tools and engagement feedback to monitor and analyse the achievement of the objectives set out in this plan.



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