



RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communications and Engagement Strategy

2025 - 2028



RUSHCLIFFE - GREAT PLACE • GREAT LIFESTYLE • GREAT SPORT



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Foreword



“Communication and engagement with our residents and stakeholders is ever more important in an age when we strive to meet the pace of change of the digital era with the need to still reach out to people face to face.

“This strategy aims to ensure Rushcliffe’s demographic is ever more informed and engaged and that we can listen to feedback on our services in ways that are relevant, convenient and timely.

“We have developed this strategy through ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders and we will continue to listen and ask all where we can improve Council services and partnerships for the benefit of all and improve the quality of life in the borough.”

***Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, Member Development and ICT,
Rushcliffe Borough Council***

“This strategy lies at the heart of the services we provide to residents every day. The ways in which our staff engage with our communities is vital to strengthening and shaping our services so they can be as effective as possible. Our corporate priorities are also linked to this, ensuring our communications and engagement assist a better quality of life, efficient services, better our environment and maintain sustainable growth.

“It’s vital our colleagues can do so in line with our key values of showing commitment, collaborating, striving for excellence, embracing inclusivity and acting with integrity.”

Adam Hill, Chief Executive, Rushcliffe Borough Council



Purpose - Information is one of our most important 'frontline' services



Residents and all stakeholders need information about Council services, what's going on in the Borough, who to contact, what the Council is doing and more about services which contribute to their quality of life.

Residents pay Council Tax to Rushcliffe Borough Council; in return they expect a variety of services, delivered to a high quality, that meet their needs, in order to understand these needs the Council needs to engage with and listen to its residents.

The easier it is for them to access these services, or to find out information about what their Council Tax is being spent on, the more satisfied they are – and happy residents make for a happy Borough.

If residents aren't informed or actively engaged, there is less opportunity to positively enhance services, activities, plans and proposals and this may not maximise networks with the community it serves. There can also be a connection between uninformed residents understandably reacting less favourably if they are not engaged effectively.

There is information to suggest that residents are more likely to engage with a council where it is clear that residents' views are taken into account and where they feel they can influence decisions, in line with those made by councillors.

This means that the production of quality communications and engagement highlighting the strategic development work of the Council as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.

To be effective, this information needs to be timely and engaging, clear and accurate, inclusive and informative as well as utilising a variety of channels and mediums to ensure as many residents as possible are informed. This is in line with the Council's Customer Access Strategy 2025-28, ICT Strategy 2025-28 where relevant and its 2023-2027 Corporate Strategy.

How do we communicate?

As of March 2025, we have approaching 30,000 followers on our social media channels.

Our corporate website has nearly 2 million page views annually, with an average of over 35,000 unique users visiting each month.

Our twice yearly Rushcliffe Reports magazine is delivered to every home in the borough, reaching out to those who may not engage with us digitally.

Our events team host a number of popular events every year and our Customer Service face-to-face sites offer opportunities for residents' queries to be answered in four locations, the most sites of any Council in Nottinghamshire.



Campaigns and digital communications

Based on insight, objectives, strategy, tactics and evaluation.



Media relations

Build effective relationships to ensure that the council voice is heard and well represented locally, regionally and nationally



Events and promotions

Deliver events that support our corporate priorities, encourage visitor footfall and grow our economy with features that appeal to sub-regional audiences.



Place and tourism

Develop and promote the cultural assets and maximise the benefits of the visitor economy and promote them locally, regionally and nationally.



Internal communications

Maintain effective channels of communication so that colleagues are well informed.

Encourage interaction, listen to colleagues and support the delivery of the five corporate values.



Corporate and civic

Communicating the civic and statutory duties of the council and the democratic process.



Leading and collaborating on crisis and emergency communications

Working with the Local Resilience Forum and Nottinghamshire County Council.



Collaborating and enhancing partnerships such as Building Control services

Maximising partnerships to deliver even more efficient services to residents.



Brand management of all communications activity

Be a guardian of all communications branding for external and internal content.

Communication and Engagement channels



Our website www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

Our social media channels:
Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube

Our weekly newsletters - available to sign up to at:
www.rushcliffe.gov.uk



Rushcliffe Reports - Delivered to every home in the borough twice a year.

Customer Service face-to-face sites in West Bridgford, Cotgrave, Bingham and East Leake.

Our events including Proms in the Park, Lark in the Park, Taste of Rushcliffe and Christmas Lights Switch On plus other seasonal activities.

Our local Town and Parish Councils - updated with fortnightly newsletter

Local media outlets including West Bridgford Wire, Nottinghamshire Live, BBC East Midlands Today and Radio Nottingham, ITV Central, Notts TV, Newark Advertiser, The Local News Group and other local radio stations.

Digital Reach



9,235
Total Facebook followers



10,274
Total X followers



3,278
Total Instagram followers



4,101
Total LinkedIn followers



Newsletters:

Garden waste: Over 25,000 subscribers

Residents newsletter: Over 6,000 subscribers



Public Relations:

Between January 2024 - December 2024:

We received and responded to 73 press enquiries.

We issued 169 press releases, all of which were used by at least one media outlet.

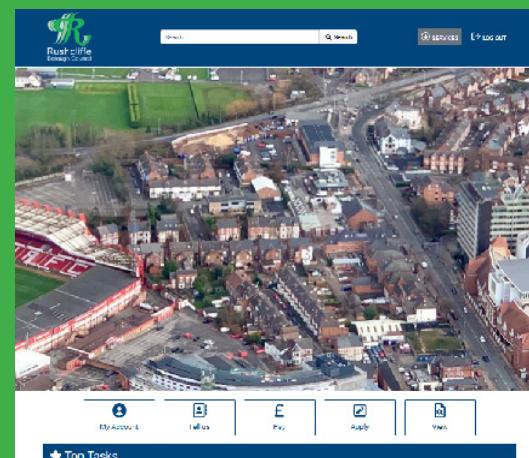
Rushcliffe Borough Council's website since 2022
On average 2 million page views, 430,000 unique page views annually

Top three web pages:

1. Garden Waste Collection (Over 26,000 visits)
2. Find and Contact Us (Over 23,000 visits)
3. Pay Council Tax (Over 19,000 visits)

Average time spent on the site: 1 minute and 28 seconds

Statistics correct as of April 2025



Target Audiences

Residents



We will foster positive relationships between the council and the community through open and honest two-way communication. We will engage and inform the community about initiatives, programmes of activity and services through a broad range of digital channels and provide targeted communications where they are needed.

In our communications, we will highlight the local authority's commitment to openness, accountability, and responsible governance. We will partner with community organisations that work with vulnerable people to help us to engage with harder-to-reach groups.

Stakeholders



We will build relationships with key stakeholders and support partnership working with community organisations, educational institutions and businesses.

We will support work to collaborate and achieve common goals as key projects and partnerships involve including EMCCA and East Midlands Freeport. We'll also actively promote working for RBC as a great employer to assist the Council's recruitment process.

Staff and elected members



Internal communications are as important to us as external communications.

As a team, we will facilitate effective communication and engagement within the organisation, align employees and members with strategic objectives and reinforce the organisation's values and culture.

Media



The Media Team is the go-to place for local media regarding issues affecting the borough. We have built trusting and positive relationships with local media and offer a professional and timely media handling service.

We provide accurate and timely information to journalists and news outlets, offer interviews and expert opinions on relevant matters and champion our community on a regional and national scale.

We will use our media channels to promote a vibrant and inclusive community and showcase the initiatives being delivered to local, regional and national audiences.



Looking ahead



External

Over the life of this Strategy, we intend to review the range of channels we use to communicate to and with residents to include potential new social media channels and further explore direct means to reach stakeholders including digital newsletters to their email inbox.

We also intend to further explore artificial intelligence tools and more engaging technologies such as more tailored and bespoke content on our social media channels, as well as continuing to develop strong, positive relationships with the local media outlets to ensure our communications reach as wide an audience as possible.

There are also a number of specific tasks to increase the transparency of our decision making processes and broaden the profile of our councillors within their local communities. We are also committed to engaging further with our residents through a large scale residents' survey and associated consultation activities to inform the future plans of the Council.

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to clear and consistent communications that meet the needs of all our stakeholders, assisted by an annual communications plan. This is also in conjunction with ensuring our content is as accessible as possible, highlighted by our continued Shaw Trust accreditation for our website.

Good external communication is vital if the Council is to enhance its already strong reputation. Effectively communicating with residents, engaging them in healthy debate, and meeting their needs as customers of the services we provide, are all important elements of delivering efficient engaging communications.

Internal

Effective internal communications are important if the Council is to inform Councillors and staff in an effective and timely manner, listening to and adapting to contemporary channels to ensure all feel engaged with the key information they need.

Our latest research shows that 87% of Council staff are proud to work for the organisation in a 2024 survey.

We will continue to consult and ask for the views of all internal stakeholders to ensure weekly updates such as Staff Matters and Councillors' Connection provide timely and informative updates in the formats that all find most convenient.

Engagement

The Council acknowledges a new focus on engagement during the lifetime of this strategy will only strengthen existing communication methods and now seeks to reach out even more to communities and those who may not directly feedback on services regularly.

New principles on the next page will highlight the direction of this refocussed approach on wider aspects of communication and engagement.

Communication and Engagement principles 2025-2028

Informing with timely, effective updates and content to stakeholders

Listening, responding and consulting with stakeholders

Involving and reaching out to stakeholder groups to shape services

Discussing and devolving selected engagement activity to stakeholder groups

Working and collaborating with partners

This strategy builds on the External and Internal Communications Strategy 2022 - 2025, with an increased focus and new section on engagement activity with stakeholders.

This new emphasis on engaging further acknowledges the balance that continues between reaching stakeholders digitally with face-to-face and other methods to ensure council services and updates reach as many residents and groups as possible.

In the duration of this strategy we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of all communication and engagement activity, using the above key themes and shape them over the lifetime of this document for more tailored effective communications and engagement.

Ways we currently engage

The following methods of engagement are how the Council currently listen and welcome feedback from residents and stakeholders on a regular basis.

It is aware when there's an issue that directly affects them, such as can be the case with any public body, the engagement can be negative and the Council seeks to resolve any issues as quickly and effectively as possible.



Consultation of planning applications



Service specific consultation such as a policy change or service review



Town and Parish Forum



Citizens' Questions at Council



Our customer feedback procedure



The petition scheme



Community governance reviews



Officers and teams directly engaging with residents day in, day out



Direct feedback to officers at Council events



Statement of community involvement

Internally we also listen and engage through our bi-annual staff surveys, and the annual "who reads what survey" to help inform newsletter content (for staff and councillors) and consultations on topics and services as necessary.



Why further engagement?

Reaching out, listening and responding to stakeholders is increasingly important in the digital era. We endeavour to reach out to hard to reach, diverse groups, those with learning difficulties, dementia or neurodiversity and younger stakeholders and others who may not use our services.

We also want to converse with those not digitally engaged so we can continue to have their voice heard on services.

We engage currently with consultations throughout the year, both generally such as our Residents Surveys and more specific service requests for views on ongoing matters including community governance reviews or new community facilities.

This strategy has been extended to continue to assess how to engage with these groups and others to ensure information and the two way communication residents is maintained. This includes on Council services, what's going on in the Borough and who to contact for queries.

The strategic development and production of quality communications and engagement over the next three years as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services and updates, is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.

We have an increasing and ever more diverse population in line with the growth of the borough and are aware an increasing number of people may not engage with the Council for a variety of reasons. The strategy seeks to engage further with a significant number of stakeholders who only contact us when they need to use our services.

We will proactively continue to tailor our communications and engagement to listen to the issues they may wish to be resolved, how they would like to engage with us in the future and how they can have their say and continually shape our services.



Evaluation - Monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy

Delivery of the tasks contained in this Strategy are monitored through the Council's internal performance monitoring systems as well as through regular statistical updates to the relevant director. The following measures are monitored directly:



External

- percentage of residents who feel the Council keeps them informed (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents who feel satisfied with Rushcliffe as a place to live (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents speaking positively about the Council (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents feeling they can influence decisions that affect their local area (residents' survey)
- the number of media releases produced
- percentage of media releases which generate further coverage
- the number of unique users visiting the Council's website each month
- satisfaction with the Council's website
- the number of transactions being completed via the Council's website
- the number of people following the Council on its social media channels
- the engagement in Council news across all social media channels

Evaluation - Monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy

Internal

- The volume of unique open clicks for internal update for staff and councillors
- The volume of engagement in staff campaigns and updates
- The volume of stakeholders who engage
- Anecdotal feed back from stakeholders month to month to tweak and shape updates
- The volume of open rate and wider engagement of Staff Matters newsletters and Intranet clicks
- Engaging directly with the Employee Liaison Group on communications
- How we engage in partnerships with fellow colleagues across Councils as we share services such as Building Control



Engagement

- The volume of activity that further listens, responds and consults with stakeholders over and above the Council's main communication channels
- The volume of stakeholder groups involved and reached to further shape Council services
- Discussing and exploring where the Council can devolve selected engagement activity to stakeholder groups to increase awareness on particular services or topics
- Identifying appropriate partners to work and collaborate with to further listen to how Council services can be improved

We pledge to

- Maintain, refresh and introduce updates and channels that ensure key messages reach the audiences in the most timely and direct manner that inform or ‘nudge’ behaviour appropriately
- Ensure information links back to corporate priorities and where applicable assists the Council’s policies and makes communications as accessible as possible
- Make stakeholders aware of wider Council related news and information that assists them updating their peer groups and communities
- Ensure our communications comply with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 and all relevant legislation
- Any external communication published in any format or on any channel will have due regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 especially with regard to objectivity, even-handedness and political bias

This strategy will be reviewed each year and fully updated again in 2028.



External Communications Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Informing	Involving stakeholders	Discussing and devolving	Discussing and devolving	Listening, responding and consulting	Listening, responding and consulting
What are we going to do?	1. Create short instructional videos and guides for key council services such as recycling, benefits, council tax and environmental priorities.	2. Continue social media 'advocacy' featuring front line colleagues and their roles in our communities – waste, customer services, revenues and benefits and internal teams.	3. Increase promotion of residents email subscription topics and continue to publicise Rushcliffe Gardener updates digitally.	4. Develop further social media campaigns, including how key council decisions such as council tax, budget setting and major projects are finalised.	5. Continually review the Performance and Reputation team's capacity to address increasing accessibility and website demands in line with AI and digital stands of ICT Strategy 2025-2028.	6. Continue annual Local Government Association advised 'who reads what' survey to further inform content of communications to different stakeholders.
When?	Review content for forthcoming 12 months, 2026 and 2027 and ongoing.	Review December 2025, 2026 and 2027 and ongoing.	Bi-monthly.	Ongoing.	Ongoing with review in December 2025, 2026 and 2027.	Annually.
Update	Simpler recycling glass completed - others to consider timing of in 2026	Simpler Recycling videos completed - others services to do	Website homepage banner promotion continues and press releases and newsletter signposts scheduled for Jan-March 2026	Set to be developed around budget meetings in March 2026 and analyse reach and response.	Ian to liaise with ICT and HeX on this and where AI can assist with better accessibility.	Councillors' Connection survey and subsequent actions completed Autumn 2025. Further Staff Matters survey to be completed Autumn 2026.

External Communications Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Informing	Informing	Discussing and devolving	Listening, responding and consulting	Involve stakeholders	Discussing and devolving
What are we going to do?	7. Further develop annual communications planner to assist resourcing and focus of activity.	8. Include behavioural change campaigns in line with Simpler Recycling and other environmental campaigns.	9. Continue to promote the RBC website to stakeholders, highlighting the council's priorities prominently and Customer Service functions.	10. Continue to report via the Executive on Freeport and EMCCA updates to aid engagement and place shaping. Assess alongside corporate and communications priorities.	11. In line with ICT Strategy 2025-2028, assess, review and analyse where AI can assist reaching more audiences with updates on Council services.	12. Complete an annual audit of existing social media channels effectiveness and review a matrix of creating accounts on new channels as they emerge and evolve.
When?	Ongoing.	Ongoing in line with key project milestones.	Ongoing promotion three times a year for the life of the strategy.	Ongoing and review December 2025, 2026 and 2027.	Ongoing.	Annually.
Update	Planner being reviewed and updated on first working day of every month.	Ongoing in line with Simpler Recycling campaign in 2026 and 2027.	Specific promotion planned in February, June and November 2026.	Updates planned for 2026 in line with key announcements from the projects included updated LDO at Ratcliffe	Continued contact with ICT and Ian Hartley on where AI can help - including possible creation of new social media channels.	Audit set to be completed in April 2026 to assess in line with quarterly updates to Pete.

Internal Communications Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Listening, responding and consulting	Informing	Informing	Involving stakeholders	Informing	Informing
What are we going to do?	1. Build on 2025 staff survey key findings to further guide content in internal updates.	2. Further identify opportunities for effective video content to influence and inform staff of each others roles and play a role in recruitment in selected posts.	3. Continue to identify ways of engaging staff and councillors with news and updates.	4. Balancing corporate messages with interactive updates that are relatable to staff and councillors in line with the Council's priorities and key strategies.	5. Review the Council's internal screensaver channels to relay relevant messages and use engaging digital content.	6. Review internal posters at sites to further influence staff on key messages.
When?	Regular checks with 2024 findings.	Ongoing.	Ongoing and review December 2025, 2026 and 2027.	Ongoing.	Six-monthly review of content.	Ongoing throughout the life of the strategy.
Update	June 2026 - email to all staff on content of Staff Matters in line with any staff survey findings.	Feb 2026 - reviewing this with Tiff who is leading on it with HR. Healthy application numbers to most roles in last six months means this will be reviewed.	Exploring if 'GIF' type content can be used more in newsletters and building on positive changes to Cllrs' Connection.	April 2026 - identifying where we can place corporate priorities more regularly into updates - using internal values as an example.	Continued updates in line with key messages from ICT, events and other teams.	Ongoing update of the two sites at Arena next to ICT area and kitchen.

Internal Communications Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Discussing and devolving	Listening, responding and consulting	Listening, responding and consulting	Working and collaborating	Informing	Working and collaborating
What are we going to do?	7. Assess video usage in staff and councillor newsletters and include a round-up of compliments every quarter reflecting and recognising achievement and effort.	8. Further animation in newsletter updates for staff, councillors and town and parish updates to freshen accompanying static content.	9. Introduce annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence.	10. Work with the Employee Liaison Group and Workplace Health Champions on identifying staff to drive internal campaigns and goals.	11. Produce and evaluate content that focuses and engages on themes from the Council's Smarter Ways of Working and Flexi Time policies for staff.	12. Continue reference to corporate values in line with HR updates in induction process.
When?	Ongoing throughout the life of the strategy.	Ongoing in line with seasonal and specific campaigns.	Annually.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.	Ongoing and review December 2025, 2026 and 2027.
Update	Video usage check completed in 2025 - only YouTube and other verified links can be used.	By March 2026, checking if 'GIF' style content can be used to make updates more engaging.	Trialling polls from April 2026.	Review with HR by June 2026 to health lead Sofi Melvin.	Consensus from HR is these policies are now embedded and successful so content only required as and when policy changes. Will keep reviewed.	Checked with HR in 2025 and Induction content updated as necessary in 2026 and 2027.

Engagement Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Listening, responding and consulting	Involving and reaching	Involving and reaching	Listening, responding and consulting	Involving and reaching	Working and collaborating
What are we going to do?	1. Ensure residents and stakeholders are engaged and consulted over possible Local Government Reorganisation	2. Further signpost opportunities with Nottinghamshire County Council's District Youth Forum	3. Strengthen links and publicise services and updates further to hard to reach and larger ethnic minority community groups, Your CVS and Town and Parish Councils	4. Increase ways stakeholders can feedback on particular frontline services such as Streetwise, parks and recycling	5. Explore incentive projects for younger people to subscribe, like, follow and engage further with Council social media and/or other channels	6. Further use free newspaper and other print outlets with verified distribution to further reach non-digitally engaged stakeholders
When?	Ongoing and in line with key project milestones.	Ongoing and at least three times a year across all channels.	Ongoing.	Agreed with Assistant Director	Post a minimum of two annual incentive driven posts.	Ongoing.
Update	All stakeholders engaged as process continues with central government consultation from February 2026 and decision in July 2026.	To be prioritised in 2026 and will appear at least three times in newsletters to all stakeholders.	By March 2026 reach out to all relevant partners to check in how they can signpost to our services more easily. TF to lead.	By March 2026 review with services areas if additional contact routes are required.	Mini-project to develop this going forward from February 2026.	Review completed with local newspaper groups at end of 2025 and similar review will be completed in December 2026 and 2027.

Engagement Action Plan 2025 - 2028

Theme	Discussing and devolving	Listening, responding and consulting	Listening, responding and consulting	Informing	Working and collaborating	Informing
What are we going to do?	7. Signpost and publicise the Nottinghamshire Citizens Panel run by Nottinghamshire County Council	8. Capture data on the demographics of who is responding to surveys to ensure the Council is receiving a fair representation of views from across its communities	9. Collect specific data on the Council's events programme from event goers to shape event formats going forward	10. Provide advice, support and guidance on any significant specific or regulatory service changes. For example, environmental health, planning or waste service changes	11. Ensure all consultations and 2027 residents' survey reaches hard to reach groups including but not exclusive to Hong Kong Notts, U3A, Your CVS, Town and Parish contacts and those with additional needs or neurodiversity.	12. Ensure residents are further aware of the channels to voice their thoughts – contact your ward councillor, Town and Parish and more engagement with Citizens' Questions opportunities
When?	Ongoing and at least three times a year across all channels.	Ongoing with all surveys.	Ongoing and review December 2025, 2026 and 2027.	Ongoing in line with service changes.	Ongoing with extra focus on 2027 residents' survey.	Ongoing with a minimum of three annual updates across all channels.
Update	Signposts to take place in conjunction with County comms being aware, February, June and October 2026.	Next check to take place with event survey follow up for Lunar New Year event.	Planned surveys in February, June, August and November in line with events programme.	Simpler Recycling advice and guidance being delivered to residents. Liaising with all service changes on any significant changes.	Applied to LGR engagement to date and same groups will be contacted/signposted to for LGR cent gov consultation in February 2026 onwards	Two press releases planned for Feb 2026 and September 2026. TF to lead.



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