

Maidstone Borough Council Communications and Engagement Strategy

2019 – 2024



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Introduction:

This Communications and Engagement Strategy is driven by our Strategic Plan which sets out the Council's long-term aspirations for the whole borough and how they will be achieved. At the centre of the Strategic Plan is a vision to make Maidstone a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential. Communication plays a key role in achieving this. Through effective communications and engagement, we will support and deliver the four priorities contained within the Strategic Plan: Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure, Homes and Communities, A Thriving Place and Safe, Clean and Green.

It is vital that we communicate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including: residents, businesses, charities and other public sector services. By providing efficient and effective engagement the Council can improve local understanding, perception and involvement.

Many residents, organisations, businesses and stakeholders interact with the Council regularly. It is important that we communicate effectively, engaging with the whole community, ensuring that messages reach everyone. To do this we use a wide range of communication channels and techniques, tailoring our messages to ensure that they are appropriate to the right audiences.

This strategy aims to provide a consistent approach in delivering key messages from Maidstone Borough Council, protecting and promoting its reputation, establishing a strong identifiable brand and helping create a borough that works for everyone.

What we do:

The communications team is responsible for all internal and external messaging, digital channels, social media platforms, working with the media and stakeholder communications. We proactively work to develop campaigns, marketing, branding and design for all our services.

We also celebrate success and seek national recognition for the work we do. As well as reaching out externally we recognise the importance of internal communications.

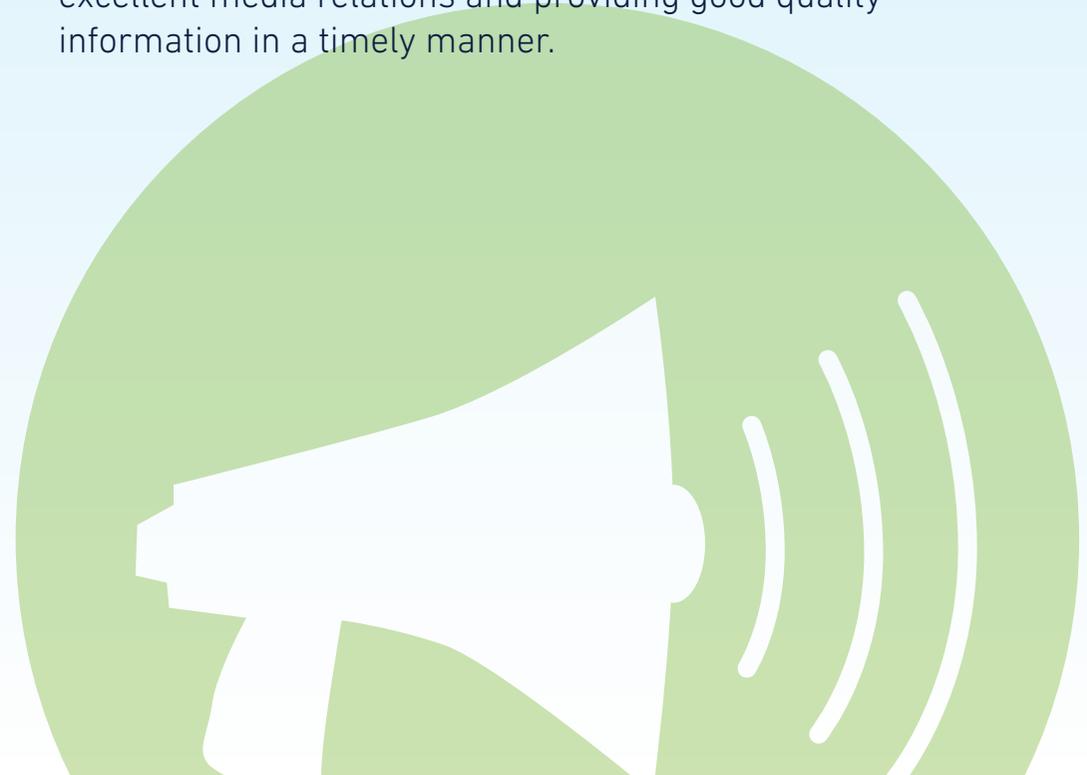
The communications team works on internal campaigns throughout the year. To promote our priorities, key messages and initiatives such as health and wellbeing.

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The team creates press releases and media statements informing the public about initiatives and campaigns. Seeking opportunities to promote the Council's services, good work, achievements and events. We organise and create opportunities, for radio, television and newspaper interviews where appropriate; meet regularly with key members of the print and broadcast media, as well as other partners and stakeholders to build and sustain trusted relationships. We work alongside senior staff and Councillors to advise and support with crisis media messaging and press statements as required. Sending out reassuring messages, providing information and details during critical incidents.

The communications team is also responsible for producing our residential magazine – Borough Insight which is produced three times per year, reflecting, promoting and reporting on key issues and campaigns supported or led by the Council. A community focussed publication, the magazine is printed and delivered to 72,000 homes across the borough of Maidstone and contains features and information that effects residents, businesses and stakeholders.

We recognise and understand the importance of reputation and work to protect and enhance the trusted name of Maidstone Borough Council through effective branding, excellent media relations and providing good quality information in a timely manner.





Digital communications:

The social media channels the communications team manages, include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. These are used to inform and update residents and stakeholders of incidents and campaigns which may affect our services and to promote the work of the Council. We upload press releases, photography and statements to a dedicated news web page which is linked to the Council website.



Marketing:

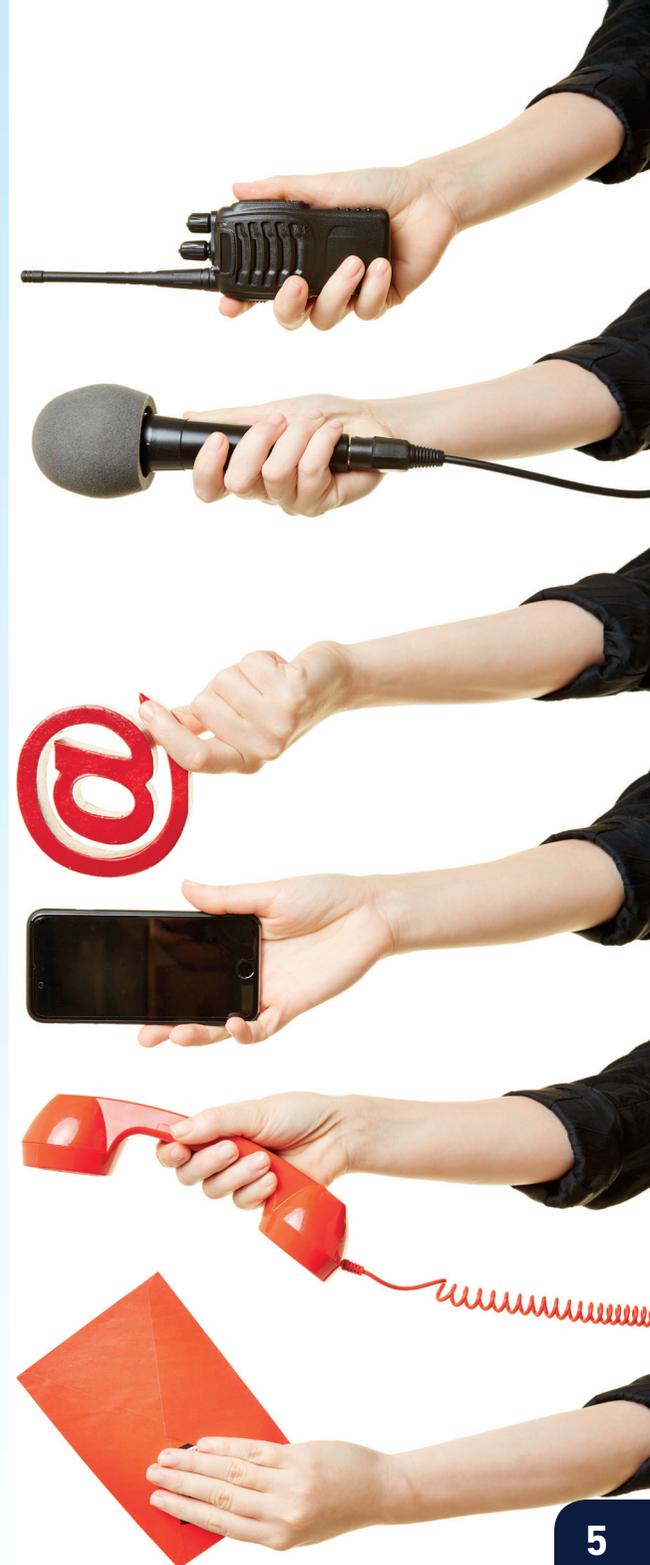
The communications team works alongside colleagues and partners to develop, deliver and evaluate co-ordinated public relations and marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the Council's priorities to both internal and external audiences.



Branding, design and print:

The communications team is responsible for ensuring that the Council's corporate identity is used consistently throughout the organisation in all messaging. A strong brand inspires confidence and positivity, which is why consistency is needed and a corporate identity style guide has been developed which is adhered to throughout our publications and literature.

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Our audiences:

Maidstone Borough Council has a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. It is important that we target our messages to the right audience, so that we can communicate with the right people at the right time in the right way.



How we measure success:

PR campaigns created by the communications team are closely aligned to projects and the work of our service areas. The messages will be clear and concise, supporting the priorities included in the Strategic Plan, outlining and promoting how these will be achieved.

The communications activity achieved by the Council is monitored through Kantar Precise Media, a global intelligence service providing data on all aspects of media measurement, monitoring and activity. Giving us in-depth detail on a daily basis of who is saying what about us, where and when. This allows us to measure our communication achievements, press coverage and social media activity along with providing analytics outlining the value of that coverage, details of engagement and data to reflect that work.

This progress will be regularly reviewed to implement any change of strategy and share updates as required.

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Communication Action Plan 2019-2020:

We, often in partnership with other stakeholders and partners, run specific campaigns, highlighting the work and service areas across the Council. Part of the role of the Communications team is to help raise awareness and engagement of these campaigns using a variety of channels to deliver appropriate messages. These will focus on the four priorities of the Council and promote Maidstone as the Business Capital of Kent to inform and engage with investors, residents, businesses and stakeholders.



Key Messages:

The key communications messages and PR campaigns supports and delivers the vision and four priorities of the Council's Strategic Plan:

Priority - Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure



We want Maidstone Borough to work for the people who live, visit and work; now and in the future. We want a borough where there is a variety of jobs, housing need is met and infrastructure is in place to meet the growing needs of our residents and economy. We also want to ensure we lead and shape our place as it grows, including leading master planning and investing to bring about high quality housing and jobs in the Borough.

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
<p>Planning – Local Plan Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the local plan mean? • How does it affect your community? • How does it reflect the Strategic Plan? • Consultation dates • How can you have your say? 	<p>Audience: Residents, developers, businesses, Councillors and Parish Councillors</p> <p>Outcomes: Increase awareness of public consultations and opportunities to feedback</p> <p>Aims: Increase respondents to consultations for each survey</p> <p>Better understanding of budget spend, issues that matter leading to better decision-making processes</p>	<p>Mixed media channels including: direct mail, press releases, video, social media, consultations, website, face-to-face consultation, Borough Insight and workshops.</p>
<p>Planning – 5 opportunity Sites:</p> <p>Maidstone West Len House Maidstone Riverside Gala Bingo Mote Road</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New development in and around the county town • New building to significantly enhance area • Associated public realm development enhancing area • Opportunities to improve traffic circulation in the town centre – including Broadway, bridges and gyratory system 	<p>Outcomes: Increase awareness of plans to improve and enhance the appearance of the county town</p> <p>Aims: To provide a better understanding of plans for Maidstone and issues that matter leading to better decision-making processes</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: leaflets, social media, specific communications aimed at traditional and online media channels.</p> <p>Comms platforms to include: website, press releases, video, testimonials, social media, progress updates, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>

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Priority - Homes and Communities



We want to have a place that people love and where they can afford to live. This means ensuring that there is a good balance of different types of homes, including affordable housing. We will have safe and desirable homes that enable good health and wellbeing for our communities. We will address homelessness and rough sleeping to move people into settled accommodation. We will work with our partners to improve the quality of community services and facilities including for health care and community activities. Residents will be encouraged and supported to volunteer and play a full part in their communities.

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Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Housing – Rough sleeper initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough Sleeper Coordinator • Outreach Service • Change, Grow, Live • Assessment Residential Centre for those leaving the streets • Emergency Winter Accommodation Provision for rough sleepers • A hostel for those with low support needs • Assisting people to move away from street lifestyle including rent in advance and deposit bonds for private rented accommodation 	<p>Audience; Housing providers, public and stakeholders</p> <p>Outcomes: To highlight the work of the housing team</p> <p>Aims: To outline the initiative and work being taken by the housing team to provide homes for all across the borough</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: leaflets, social media, specific communications aimed at traditional and online media channels.</p> <p>Comms platforms to include: website, press releases, video, testimonials, social media, progress updates, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Housing – Homefinders	<p>Working with landlords to provide secure and affordable rented accommodation across the borough</p> <p>To improve the opportunity for local-residents to access the private sector housing market in the Maidstone borough</p>	<p>Audience: Residents, businesses and landlords</p> <p>Outcomes: To improve communications with landlords and tenants</p> <p>Aims: To highlight Homefinder service and its benefits to all</p> <p>To provide affordable homes to vulnerable tenants across the borough</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: video, social media, events, targeted messages, leaflets, campaigns, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>
Housing – Housing First	<p>Joint partnership with Golding Homes and Porchlight providing housing for all</p>	<p>Audience: Housing providers, public and stakeholders</p> <p>Outcomes: to highlight the work in partnership with others</p> <p>Aims: To outline the initiative and work being taken by the housing team to provide homes for all across the borough</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: video, social media, events, targeted messages, leaflets, campaigns, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>

Priority 3 - A thriving pla



Maidstone is a borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and is an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents. Maidstone is the Business Capital of Kent; we will continue to grow our local economy with high employment, good local jobs and thriving local businesses. We want our town and village centres to thrive and be fit for the future. We will lead investment in the County town and rural service centres through our regeneration projects and working with partners. We are proud of our heritage and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer.

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Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
<p>Economic Development – Innovation Centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone is the Business Capital of Kent • Providing high quality office space, facilities and support for small & medium sized enterprises in life science, healthcare and med-tech sectors • Complementing Kent Medical Campus • State of the art conference facilities • Great place, to do business and work • Attracting new businesses and investors to Maidstone 	<p>Audience: Businesses – large and small – particularly in the medical, healthcare, med-tech and science sectors</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise awareness of project and the investment undertaken by the Council to invest in area</p> <p>Aims: To raise media awareness and create positive coverage from trade, local and national press</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: leaflets, social media, specific communications aimed at industry trade press and business investors including messages to appropriate business partners and stakeholders. Comms platforms to include: Business in Kent website, press releases, video, testimonials, social media, progress updates, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Economic Development – Maidstone East Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in town centre • Mixed use site including office, resident and commercial • Improving the gateway to the town • Improving the visitor experience to the county town of Maidstone • Supporting employers and employees in the town 	<p>Audience: Residents, businesses and media</p> <p>Outcomes: Raise awareness of project as it develops</p> <p>Aims: Encourage inwards investment and relocation of businesses. Securing Maidstone as the Business Capital of Kent</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: leaflets, social media, specific communications aimed at industry trade press and business investors including messages to appropriate business partners and stakeholders. Comms platforms to include: Business in Kent website, press releases, video, testimonials, social media, progress updates, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website</p>
Economic Development - Mote Park - Outdoor Adventure Area, Maidstone Leisure Centre Play area Skate Park Visitor Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.3 million investment in Mote Park over three years • Securing the parks sustainable future • Visitor Centre – room hire • Adventure Area, Mini-golf, High Ropes, Skate park, play area, and Segways. • Improved access routes to park • Improved facilities including toilets and car parking. • Maidstone – a great place to visit and stay 	<p>Audience: Residents, visitors, event organisers, business for corporate hospitality, schools and community groups</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased awareness and interest in Mote Park</p> <p>Knowledge of commercial offer when Serco take over the management of the facilities</p> <p>Aims: Increase visitor numbers to the park improving revenue for café and leisure centre</p>	<p>Mixed media channels including: press releases, video, project pages on our website, public consultation, signage, Borough Insight, parks newsletters (digital), social media, crisis comms as needed (for example - sewer collapse, leisure centre roof repairs and flooding)</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Parking Services – Park & Ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service every 20 minutes • New pay the bus driver scheme • Free parking for Park & Ride users • Viable option for commuters • Maidstone Museum link – vehicles livery as dinosaurs • Stress free getting in and out of the town centre • Museum incentive – 20% discount with Park & Ride ticket • Sustainable Transport Plan 	<p>Audience: Residents, commuters, visitors and businesses</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased use of Park & Ride service</p> <p>Aims: Increased revenue generated from service - improved sustainability Increased car sharing Improved modal choice</p>	<p>Mixed media channels: Our website, Intranet, social media, Borough Insight, flyers, billboard, bus advertising, commercial poster sites, press releases and media interviews.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage with residents – volunteer litter pick campaigns, media for local radio, local TV and radio interviews</p>
Economic Development – the Museum 52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's On at the Museum • Exhibitions • A place for all to visit • Free to visit • Special events • Family friendly • Celebrating the history of Maidstone 	<p>Audience: Families, visitors, residents and stakeholders</p> <p>Outcomes: To improve visitor numbers to the Museum</p> <p>Aims: Raise awareness of the Museum and improve engagement with all</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: press releases, photography, video, social media, events, targeted messages, leaflets, campaigns, Borough Insight, Intranet and the Visit Maidstone Website.</p> <p>Work closely with local media organising radio and television interviews, and photographic opportunities</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
<p>Economic Development – Making Maidstone More Active</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide consultation exercise to help plan the design of future leisure facilities and services • Capture the views of as many residents and groups as possible aiming for at least 2000 responses • To engage as many stakeholders for leisure as possible • To engage as many non-active stakeholders as possible • Recruitment of local champions to be the voice of the community • To collect data from representative samples of the borough • Engage all types of people to learn about their activity levels • Make it easier for people to be more active • Make it clear that responses will be used to build a new leisure provision for the future 	<p>Audience: Residents, active and non-active leisure stakeholders, local champions, parish councils, councillors, local businesses</p> <p>Outcomes: Receive a min of 2000 responses to the consultation Increase awareness of the consultation and how to engage with it</p> <p>Aims: Increase awareness that the consultation will help shape future leisure provision Recruit local champions from local community groups Increased activity on social media around the consultation</p>	<p>A phased communication approach, initially raising awareness of the dates of consultation, recruiting local champions, offer of incentives to complete consultation, countdown to end of consultation. Followed by forums and more detailed analysis during the next year.</p> <p>Using various direct and indirect methods; press releases, community radio, social media messaging, staff bulletin, articles and advert in Borough Insight, our website, staff to attend public events with ipads for on the spot completion and direct letters/ emails to groups.</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Environment and Public Realm – Partnership Working – One Maidstone (BID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership working with One Maidstone • Bank Street Blitz • Projects and campaigns • Importance of • Maidstone Borough Council working together with its residents, businesses and stakeholders 	<p>Audience: Residents, businesses, stakeholders and media</p> <p>Outcomes: Educating residents, businesses and stakeholders of the work being carried out</p> <p>Aims: Improving the appearance and cleanliness of the borough</p>	<p>Working with One Maidstone to create targeted campaigns and projects to include events highlighting the work of the Waste Crime team using a variety of media channels and tools:</p> <p>Press releases, social media, leaflets, posters, radio and TV interviews, editorial, photography and videography</p>

Priority – Safe, Clean and Green:



We will keep Maidstone an attractive and clean place for all. Maidstone is a safe place to live and we want our residents to feel safe. We want to protect and where possible enhance our environment and make sure our parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are high quality by ensuring they are looked after, well managed and respected.

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Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
<p>Community Protection – Domestic Abuse Matters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the work of the community protection team to support victims of Domestic Abuse • Working with key partners (including Kent Police), to highlight the affect that Domestic Abuse can have • Supporting victims of Domestic Abuse • Outlining help that is available to victims and all those affected by Domestic Abuse • Highlighting what to do and how to seek help 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, medical professionals, hairdressers - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the effects of domestic abuse</p> <p>Raised awareness of campaign to combat Domestic Abuse</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety reflected</p> <p>Raised awareness of joint schemes between the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: video, social media, roadshows, targeted messages in areas of low uptake, Borough Insight, Intranet and our website.</p> <p>Engage directly with stakeholders and the media throughout this project.</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Community Protection – Safety in the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with key partners (including Kent Police) to keep everyone safe across the borough 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses and stakeholders across the borough</p> <p>Outcomes: An improved sense of safety reflected in resident survey percentages</p> <p>Aims: Raised awareness of joint schemes with the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns using a variety of media channels including: video, social media, events, targeted messages, leaflets, campaigns, Borough Insight, Intranet and Website.</p> <p>Stage events to engage with victims and partners involved with Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage with media for local radio, local TV and radio interviews.</p>
Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer holiday activities Fun for all the family Come and visit the park Free to be there Environmental and nature project Health and wellbeing 	<p>Audiences: Families Residents and businesses Local media</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise awareness of Cobtree Manor Park</p> <p>Aims: Increase visitor numbers Improve image of the park and promote the work of the team</p>	<p>Create campaigns and focus on projects by using a variety of media channels including: press releases, photography, video, social media, radio interviews events, targeted messages, leaflets, campaigns, Borough Insight, Intranet and the Cobtree website.</p> <p>Work closely with local media including organising radio and television interviews, and photographic opportunities</p>

Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Environment and Public Realm – Go Green Go Wild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards projects and grant funding (£250) scheme available to local projects • Wild flower meadows and gardens across the borough • Working with local gardening schemes and volunteer groups to promote environmental living • Supporting volunteer groups and individuals • Health and Wellbeing 	<p>Audience: Families Residents and businesses Local media Gardening volunteer groups and individuals</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise awareness of the Go Green, Go Wild scheme</p> <p>Aims: Improve image of the work that the project has achieves Increase engagement with project users</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns and projects to include events highlighting the work of Go Green Go Wild using a variety of media channels and tools:</p> <p>Press releases, social media, leaflets, posters, radio and TV interviews, editorial, photography and videography</p>
Economic Development – Clean Air for Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-idling campaign – switch off engines outside schools • Improve air quality • Improve health and wellbeing • Improving environmental health • Improving air quality across the borough of Maidstone • Improving the health of our children 	<p>Audience: Families Residents and businesses Local media Schools – pupils and teachers, groups and individuals</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise awareness of the Clean Air for Schools campaign</p> <p>Aims: Improve image of the work that the project achieves Increase engagement with project users and potential users</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns and projects to include events highlighting the work of the Clean Air for Schools campaign using a variety of media channels and tools:</p> <p>Press releases, social media, leaflets, posters, radio and TV interviews, editorial, photography and videography</p>

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Service area and campaign	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes	Delivery Method
Environment and Public Realm– Waste and Recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High recycling figures – above expected national average across the borough • Benefits of recycling • Importance of recycling • Contamination and how to avoid it • Working together to improve the environment • the waste and recycling team working together with its residents, businesses and stakeholders • Educating all – how to recycle properly 	<p>Audience: Residents, businesses, stakeholders and media</p> <p>Outcomes: Improve and increase recycling rates Reduce contaminated bin figures Save revenue Cut costs of recycling contamination</p> <p>Aims: Improve the image of the borough Raise awareness of the waste team and what they do</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns and projects to include events highlighting the work of the waste and recycling team using a variety of media channels and tools:</p> <p>Press releases, social media, leaflets, posters, radio and TV interviews, editorial, photography and videography</p>
Environment and Public Realm - Waste Crime Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the waste crime team • Number of vehicle seizures • Fly-tipping prosecutions • Projects and campaigns • Successful prosecutions • Importance of • Maidstone Borough Council working together with its residents, businesses and stakeholders 	<p>Audience: Residents, businesses, stakeholders and media</p> <p>Outcomes: Educating residents, businesses and stakeholders as to what the waste crime team do</p> <p>Reducing waste crime figures</p> <p>Aims: Improving the appearance and cleanliness of the borough</p>	<p>Targeted campaigns and projects to include events highlighting the work of the waste crime team using a variety of media channels and tools:</p> <p>Press releases, social media, leaflets, posters, radio and TV interviews, editorial, photography and videography</p>

