



# Communications toolkit 2015





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# 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Powys County Council communications toolkit. We hope this resource gives you everything you need to communicate effectively and achieve the maximum impact for your project. This handy reference tool is for staff and members.

Effective communication is the key to success whether your work involves engaging the wider community or communicating with groups of staff and managers across the council.

The information has been designed to make sure we are all using the same standards and taking a consistent approach to communications.

The toolkit includes practical help and advice on a wide variety of areas including our corporate identity, dealing with the media, consulting with the public, marketing and the web.

The toolkit is a “living document” and will grow as new communications channels emerge. If there is something you want included in the toolkit let the Communications Team know.

We hope you find the toolkit useful. Your feedback is always appreciated so please contact the Communications Team with any comments or ideas for improvement.

*Communications Team*



## 2. Developing a communications plan

Before starting out on a journey, it is always a good idea to have a clear idea of where you are going and how you are going to get there. It is the same principle when creating a communications plan.

A good communications plan can be like a road map for your communications activities – showing the overall direction you will take to accomplish your objectives.

Before you start developing a communications plan, remember to:

- **Keep it simple** - a communications plan doesn't need to be pages long – just clearly presented and easy to understand
- **Make it focused** - don't try to do everything, be realistic about what's achievable
- **Know as much as you can** about your target audiences before you begin
- **Review** - look at similar communication activities that have taken place in the past – what can you use or repeat? What worked well and what could be improved?
- **Hold a brainstorming session** - talk with colleagues to trawl for fresh ideas and approaches
- **Look at the context** - remember that external factors may have a bearing or influence on your plan, for example elections or seasonal events
- **Be prepared to be flexible** - update your plan as you go along, making the most of experience and opportunities as they arise
- **Keep your eyes open** - look for opportunities for working with external organisations or partners who may be targeting the same groups as you
- **Feedback** - ask colleagues for feedback on your plan – they may have useful suggestions to make
- **Conduct a SWOT analysis** - to ascertain factors which might impact on your communications activities



## 3. Evaluation

A good communications plan will help you to stay in control of progress and provide a framework for evaluating your success. Although every plan will be different, most should include the following key information:

- **Objectives and aims** - be clear from the outset about what you are trying to achieve, remember to ensure they fit in with relevant corporate or service level objectives
- **Target audiences** - identify who your communications activity is targeted at
- **Key messages** - what messages are you trying to communicate?
- **Strategy** - the approach you will take to achieve your communications objectives
- **Tactics** - specific communications activities, tools and techniques that will make each part of your strategy a reality, including a simple activity schedule outlining how you plan to roll out each set of activities over a period of time
- **Budgeting** - how much money you have available in the budget will ultimately dictate the size and scale of your communications activity
- **Evaluation** - It is crucial that your activity plan outlines the criteria that you will use to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of your communications activities

Use the communications plan pro-forma (appendix 1) to help produce your communications plan.

For more information and advice on creating a communications plan, please contact the Communications Team.



## 4. Style guide and corporate identity

Just like individuals, every company or organisation has an identity – its public face and first impression. An organisation's identity (such as Powys County Council) allows customers, staff, councillors, suppliers and partners to recognise, understand and clearly describe the organisation concerned.

The identity of any organisation is complex. The visual identity plays a key role, however, the effectiveness of its services or products, the shared values and ambitions of its employees and the corporate tone of voice are all important.

The visual identity manifests itself in a number of ways. As well as the logo, typeface and colours, the corporate stationery, marketing literature, website, buildings signage, customer services and information points, vehicles, uniforms, events and every aspect of promotional activity all contribute.

All activities undertaken by the council should be clearly and instantly identifiable as the work of Powys County Council. This is part of our accountability to the residents of Powys, showing them the full range of services we provide.

Ensuring our corporate identity is portrayed correctly provides a strong and consistent visual image of the council.

For more advice about applying the council's corporate identity, please refer to the corporate style guide (see intranet page 3575) or contact the Communications Team.

It is important to make sure everyone understands what we write. Whether it is a letter, text for a publication, news article or email, we should make sure we are clear and concise.

Ensuring we use a consistent style for all our written material helps us to communicate effectively with residents, councillors, partners and other members of staff.

Well-written and easy to understand prose comes across as professional and gives Powys County Council a good public image.

Below are a few basic rules that should be followed when writing anything for the council.

### Abbreviations and acronyms

Unless a word is universally known in its abbreviated form, for example DVDs or TV, using abbreviations by themselves can look unprofessional. Always write the words out in full on the first appearance in the text, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. Once you've done this, you can then write the abbreviation throughout the rest of the text.

When referring to a specific elected member you can abbreviate the word councillor to Cllr. If you are writing about councillors in general, spell the word out.

Other points to remember are:

- Always use the word 'and' rather than '&'
- Write 'for example' rather than 'eg'
- Spell months and days of the week out in full – January not Jan
- Use 'or' instead of a slash (/)

### Bold, italics and underlining

Bold and italics can help give weight to headings or announcements, but should be used in moderation.

Italics can be used when referring to titles of books, newspapers, magazines or TV and radio programmes (The Guardian). Do not use bold, CAPITALISED or underlined text for emphasis; always use italics.

### Bullet points

Bullet points break up text and are pleasing on the eye. By using bullet points you can make your key points stand out.



Capital letters should be used sparingly. Never use block capitals – THEY ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO READ.

Here are a few simple dos and don'ts:

**Headings:** Always write headlines and headings in lower case (after the first initial capital letter).

**The council:** Powys County Council needs initial capitals, but 'the council' or 'county council' does not. Never describe the council as 'the authority' or 'the local authority'.

**Government:** The Government, when referring to the current administration, needs a capital letter, but government in general doesn't. Political parties, such as the Labour group, Liberal Democrats and the Conservative party, also need capital letters.

**Job titles, team names and departments:** Generic job titles should be written in lower case (trading standards officer, social worker). When referring to a specific person, job titles should have initial capitals, for example; Anya Richards, Senior Communications Manager. Team names and departments should be in upper case, for example; Communications Team, Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet.

**Seasons:** Use lower case for spring, summer, autumn and winter.

### Dates and times

Dates should be written in the format 22 October 2009. Never prefix a date with the word 'the'. And with the exception of 21st century, for example, always cut out th/nd/rd/st next to the numbers.

Times are written without a space between the figure and am or pm and with a full stop between the hour and minutes, not a colon. So it is 8.30am or 8am. Do not write in the 24-hour clock style.

### Jargon

Try to avoid jargon, especially in documents intended for the public. Remember who your audience is and understand that they will not know the meaning of many council phrases or terms. For example, use people rather than stakeholder, guide rather than benchmark and bin rather than refuse container.

Never start a sentence with a figure; always spell it out. Numbers one to nine need to be spelt out in words, 10 and above to be written as figures.

When writing percentages, the % symbol can be used.

### Punctuation

Here are a few of the common punctuation marks and the council's approach to using them:

**Apostrophes:** These should be used to show possession (belonging to), to show you have left out a letter or to show an expression of time, for example:

- The service user's response (one person)
- The services users' response (more than one person)
- Can't, don't, isn't, I'm
- Thursday's meeting, six days' notice

**Full stops:** Do not use full stops after headings. Similarly, do not use full stops after abbreviations like Mr, Mrs, Cllr or Dr, unless of course it is the end of a sentence.

**Hyphens and dashes:** Hyphens are used to join words together so they are read as one and help to distinguish between similar words, for example:

- Long-term solution
- Seven-year-old child
- Full-time
- Re-cover and recover
- Re-sign and resign

Dashes can be used to show a pause in a sentence. They are typically used in pairs and are put beside a word or phrase written as an explanation or afterthought.

**Quotation marks:** Use double quotation marks at the beginning and end of quotes. Single quotation marks are only ever used around a quote within a quote (She said: "I was waiting at the bus stop when someone asked 'Is this the right bus for Brecon?' when the bus arrived.")

Full stops and other punctuation go inside the quotation marks if a completed sentence is being quoted. If only part of a sentence is being quoted, the full stop goes outside the final quotation marks.

Use a colon between verb and quote (she said:).

Keep sentences short – no more than 15 to 20 words.

### Spacing

Use just one space after a full stop between sentences. Leave one space between paragraphs.

### Typeface

Use Arial (minimum 12pt) for all internal documents. Ensure all text is aligned left and not justified.

#### 10 tips on writing for the council

- Before you start, think about who you are writing for – what do they need to know and what is your key message?
- Use clear, simple language which keeps to the point
- Make sure your tone is friendly, relaxed and personable – say 'we' rather than 'the council' and 'you' rather than 'the customer' or 'resident'
- Write in a way that comes easy to you – use everyday spoken language not formal jargon
- Don't use any unexplained acronyms or abbreviations
- Keep sentences short
- Use bullet points rather than long lists
- Keep sentences active rather than passive – they will be more personable, professional and usually shorter. For example, 'We will collect your bin every Monday' rather than 'Your bin will be collected by the council on a Monday'; and 'The directors meet next week' rather than 'A meeting will be held by the directors next week'
- You can start a sentence with 'and', 'but', 'because', 'so' or 'however'
- Always spell-check and proof read what you have written – get a colleague to read it for you to check you haven't missed anything



## 6. Public relations and the media

### Protocol on publicity and dealing with the media

Powys County Council's Communications Team manages all press and media relations on behalf of the council, including emergency media handling, media enquiries and issuing all news releases. It also provides a media monitoring service for councillors and senior managers.

This document sets out the council's approach to relations with the public and the media and is subject to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (see intranet page 295). The code was issued under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986 and was updated in 2001 in recognition of the constitutional changes introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, in particular:

- The new political structures in local government
- Increased emphasis on partnerships and new consultation requirements
- Rapid changes in communication technology
- Provisions in the Human Rights, Disability Discrimination and Equal Opportunities Acts

The revised code defines the main functions of local authority publicity as:

“To increase public awareness of the services provided by the authority and the functions it performs; to allow local people a real and informed say about issues that affect them; to explain to electors and ratepayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities; and in general to improve local accountability”.

### News releases

These deal proactively with news matters that the council wants to promote, publicise or explain. The Communications Team will issue all news releases on behalf of the council.

Services are encouraged to initiate general news releases but all releases must be issued through the Communications Team to ensure consistent corporate style and distribution. Senior officers should brief the Communications Team about possible good news stories as well as situations that may generate adverse publicity.

News releases will be distributed to all relevant print, broadcast and specialist media by email, or mail as appropriate.

Copies of proactive news releases are published on the council website – [www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk)



## 6. Public relations and the media

### Political groups

Nothing in the Powys County Council media protocol precludes any political group from issuing its own news information and making any other arrangements for media coverage, but this should not be done using council resources.

Statements issued by the council must be politically neutral and unbiased and should not appear in whole or in part to indicate public support for a political party.

### Individual councillors

The Communications Team cannot provide general press support or produce publicity for individual councillors in their ward role. Information will be restricted to their individual contact details, their role in the council and their responsibilities.

### Elections, referendums and petitions

In the period between the notice of an election and the election itself there should be no proactive publicity in all forms for candidates or other politicians involved in the election. The Communications Team will not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual councillors or groups of councillors.

It is, however, acceptable for the council to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided the answers are factual and not political. Proactive events arranged in this period should not include councillors likely to stand for election.

A full copy of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity is available on intranet page 295 or from the Communications Team.

### Responding to media enquiries

To maintain a consistent approach with the media all enquiries will be received by the Communications Team. High priority will be given to media requests for interviews, information and comments.



## 6. Public relations and the media

### Who can talk to the media?

The Communications Team will be the first point of contact for all media enquiries. Their role is to co-ordinate written and verbal responses from the appropriate councillor or officer and ensure deadlines are met.

Members of the Executive Management Team, strategic directors and heads of service are authorised to speak to the media, following consultation with the Communications Team. Other employees may be authorised by strategic directors to undertake interviews. Officers will only comment to confirm matters of fact and operational details and must not express personal opinion on policy issues.

Employees who have not been authorised should not comment to the media about any aspect of their job and employment by the council or its policies. Employees who are approached by the media on council issues should direct them immediately to the Communications Team.

News releases, statements and responses to enquiries on sensitive subjects, such as major planning applications, must be approved by the relevant cabinet member.



## 7. Crisis communications

In the face of a crisis it is important to consider communications as a priority. There are five main points to remember:

### Trust

In a crisis all communications must remain accountable, honest, fair and transparent. All messages should have senior management (councillors, chief executive, directors, etc) endorsement.

### Announcing early

The public's parameters of trust are established in first announcement made during a crisis. Benefits of announcing the details of a crisis will nearly always outweigh the risks - people will often overestimate potential risks if things are kept secret.

### Transparency

Always make sure messages are candid, easily understood, complete and factually accurate.

### Understanding the public

Make sure you have a dialogue with the public and appreciate their views even if unfounded. Remember to include information about what the public can do for themselves to help in the event of the crisis.

### Planning

Decisions and actions have more effect on trust than communications. Crisis communications must therefore be integrated with the crisis response. You should have potential issues or crisis' identified and have plans in place to mobilise an effective and efficient response.

For more information on planning communications in preparation of or in event of a crisis, please contact the Communications Team.



## 8. Marketing

We all have a role to play when it comes to marketing. Each letter, email, phone call, face-to-face conversation, event, written communication etc, has an impact on how people perceive Powys County Council. As members of staff, we should act in the best interests of the council at all times and remember that we are seen as its ambassadors.

By ensuring we maintain a high standard of consistent communications and marketing we will raise the profile of the council and improve services for residents, partners and suppliers.

Whether you want to increase awareness of an existing service, promote the introduction of a telephone number or advertise a specific event, marketing campaigns can be very effective.

Specific marketing can be in many different forms, including:

- adverts in local press
- radio adverts and sound-bites
- vehicle advertising
- leaflets and booklets
- posters
- promotional items and giveaways
- banners and display stands
- emails and text messages
- websites and social media
- events

There are many different things to consider before you start any marketing activities:

- What are you trying to market?
- What is your key message?
- What is your objective?
- How would you measure if this objective is met?
- Who are your target audience?
- What marketing medium would be most suitable for this audience?
- What budget do you have? (make sure you get quotes for desired activities before you begin)
- What timescales are you working to?
- Are you considering the most cost effective and environmentally friendly way of marketing?
- If you are producing literature or posters, how many do you need and how will they be distributed?
- If you are going to include a website address in your marketing do you need to get a URL shortcut created, for example [www.powys.gov.uk/leisure](http://www.powys.gov.uk/leisure) ? This allows people to get straight to your information but ensures you do not have to publish a complicated URL





## 8. Marketing

Once you have decided on a marketing activity you must make sure you plan what needs to be done and when. Write it down and allocate timescales – it often helps to work backwards from the date you want the marketing campaign to start. Remember:

- You must request for your URL shortcut to be setup by ICT before you produce your publicity, to ensure that it is available (remember to supply a Welsh equivalent)
- getting publications, posters and adverts designed all takes time (this varies dependant on size of publication and number of amends)
- you must get text translated, which can take up to 14 working days
- printing will take 10 – 14 working days
- You must leave time for design in the process
- advertising space must be booked in advance
- some publications have long lead-in times for articles, editorial and adverts
- think about how you will distribute any publications and factor in the relevant time and costs associated with this
- distribution companies will need notice in order to deliver leaflets, etc
- all publicity must conform to the council's style guide

### Publications and printed materials

Before going ahead and getting leaflets designed and printed, take some time to consider if printed material is the right medium to use to get your message across.

Consider other options such as web, email or an article in an existing publication before deciding upon the need for printed materials. Printing can be very expensive, as well as not the most environmentally friendly choice. You must decide if it is the most cost-effective option.

Having decided to produce a printed piece of material (such as a leaflet, brochure, poster etc) and having referred to the earlier general marketing points, follow these simple steps to ensure you make the process as quick, efficient and cost effective as possible:

- Speak with the Graphic Design Team to discuss your requirements and schedule in your piece of work (remember that they are often working on many projects at once and may not be able to begin work on yours immediately)
- Write and collate all written content, known as copy, bearing in mind your target audience to ensure an appropriate style, for example; formal, technical etc (see section 2)
- Ensure all copy is checked for accuracy (including spellings, grammar, correct phone numbers etc) and agreed by the relevant line-manager or person responsible
- If using photos make sure all copyrights, permissions and consents have been gained (see section 6) and that all captions are correct
- Email all written copy to [translation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:translation@powys.gov.uk) allowing 14 days for the translated copy to be returned
- Complete a design brief pro-forma (see appendix 2) and email to the designer along with the Welsh and English copy, all relevant photos, logos and any further instructions and or information



## 8. Marketing

- When you receive your proof back from the designer make sure you check it carefully. Pay particular attention to:
  - Spelling and punctuation
  - Phone numbers and web addresses
  - Names, job titles, organisations
  - Photo captions
  - Ensure that any amends are made to both the English and Welsh copy and that these are approved by the Translation Team
  - Once the final copy has been signed off, confirm the quantities required, the cost codes and delivery instructions
  - Make sure your distribution list is created and up-to-date before the printed materials are delivered to ensure they can be distributed quickly

### Advertising

From time to time service areas may be contacted by publications selling special offers on advertising packages. It is always advisable to seek advice from the Communications Team before committing yourself to any advertising.

Advertising space must be booked in advance – different publications have different deadlines – but it is advisable to book space as early as you can.

All adverts must be designed in accordance with the council's style guide and must be bilingual.

### Recruitment advertising

Please call the council's Recruitment Team on 01597 826409 for advice on recruitment advertising.

### Public notices

All statutory public notices must be booked through our advertising agent, go to intranet page 6287 for more details.

For further advice on marketing and advertising, please contact the Communications Team.

### Events

The Communications Team often organise and run corporate events, such as our presence at the Royal Welsh Show, but it is up to service areas to arrange other, service specific, events.



## 8. Marketing

However, the Communications Team is always on hand to offer advice. Whether you are organising a conference or exhibition from scratch, or setting up a stand at a careers event, there are several tasks you need to do to ensure everything runs smoothly. Here are a few things to remember:

- If possible, approach potential partners to share both the financial and the organisational burden
- Write a venue specification, including:
  - Required size and number of rooms
  - Dates and times
  - Potential number of attendees
  - Catering requirements
  - Internet access, power points, laptops, multimedia equipment etc
  - Accessibility requirements
  - Cost

Search for an appropriate venue based on all your specifications and book at least 4 – 8 weeks in advance. Remember to confirm the booking closer to the date

- Do you require speakers for your event? Approach potential people well in advance. Ensure you gather any presentations prior to the event
- Do you need printed invites? You may need to get these designed and printed (please refer to the publications section). Remember to invite everyone (special guests, councillors, service users, staff)
- Organise promotion and marketing of the event. Think about your target audience and whether you will need to use the website, local radio, flyers, adverts, posters. Remember to plan enough time to get things designed and printed, if needed (please refer to the publications section)
- If appropriate, ask the Communications Team about informing the local media and inviting them to attend as well as sending out a press release about the event
- Are you planning an exhibition or display? Remember to give yourself enough time to create new display materials with the graphic designers or book the corporate display panels with the Communications Team and think about how you are going to use them
- Make sure you have enough volunteers to help with the set up, running and clearing up of the event
- Take a camera with you to take photos at the event. Remember that you will need to get verbal and written consent to photograph people, especially children (consent forms and camera hire are available from the Communications Team)
- During and after the event, try to get feedback from those attending for evaluation purposes
- You may be required to carry out a risk assessment prior to the event, especially if it involves members of the public is held in a public space or outdoors. Speak to the Health and Safety Team for advice



## 9. Photographs

Photographs are an excellent way of illustrating publications, posters, news articles or web pages. However, the introduction of the Data Protection Act and human rights legislation has meant we need to exercise caution when using photographs.

### Consent and copyright

You must ensure you have the correct permissions and copyright to use the photographs, especially if they are of service users, residents, children or staff. This permission must also outline how the images will be used.

Before taking photographs it is essential that permission is obtained. If the child or young person is under 18 then permission must be obtained from the parent, guardian or carer. A consent form is available from the Communications Team.

For school children (both primary and secondary) it is advisable to send parents or guardians a consent form with the school registration information. However, as children become older they will be more aware of their rights. If they object then you cannot use the image.

Failure to clear copyright permission could result in legal proceedings against the council. Copyright clearance must also be obtained if images are downloaded or copied from the internet.

Photographs taken by local newspapers for journalism are exempt from the Data Protection Act.

No images can be used unless approved by Powys County Council's Communications Team. Any photographs used should be of the highest quality as these are usually the first impressions the public get of the council. Poor quality images will reflect badly on the council.

### Booking photographers

If you need to book a professional photographer please contact the Communication Team.

Remember to give the photographer a full brief of the type of photos you want. For example, who needs to be included in the photo, where it should be taken and what it will be used for.

### Taking photos

If you are going to take your own photos, you can borrow a digital camera from the Communications Team.



## 9. Photographs

Things to remember when taking a photo:

- Always ask a person's permission before taking photographs (ask parents if subject is a child under 18) and complete a consent form
- Make sure the camera is set to take a high quality (high resolution) image
- If taking a photo of a person or object, choose a simple background so the main image stands out easily
- Where possible, take photos outdoors – natural sunlight produces better results
- Set your flash to fire outdoors if possible to eliminate shadows caused by the sun
- Experiment with the camera first – this way you learn which is the best setting to use in different situations and for different compositions
- Take close up photos where appropriate – pictures become more interesting when you can see the detail
- Move the subject slightly off centre to make a more interesting composition
- If the subject you are shooting is taller than it is wide, turn your camera to take a vertical picture
- Be aware of your surroundings including reflective surfaces and bright lights
- If using a digital camera, take lots of pictures then choose the best one later

### Photographs for websites

If the photograph is for website use then no personal details should be used in the caption or text, first names can be used. No email, telephone, or postal addresses should be used.

If a pupil's name is in the text then the photograph should not be used. Group photographs should have general captions, for example, "Powys youngsters learn about recycling".

**Photographs of people taken more than two years ago should not be used.**



## 10. Web

The internet is fast becoming the primary communications channel, not only in the public sector, but across all types of organisations.

Web should be a major part of any communication strategy you might take but “just sticking something on the web” is unlikely to be effective. Instead, you need to think about a number of things, decide what you want to achieve and plan how to get there.

Keep the following things in mind:

### Look at what works

Before you plan the content for your web page, it’s a good idea to look at what other people are doing. Make a list of what works and what doesn’t work and apply that to anything you create.

### Make it usable

People read content on websites in a different way to how they read printed copy. For that reason you need to design it in a different way.

The following tips will help you achieve that:

- Take the pyramid approach, so that your home page has a little introductory information, which points to further information if required. People are happy to drill down for more details as long as they find what they want when they get there
- Do not use “click here” for links (visually impaired people using a screen reader won’t know what the links are for unless they read the entire text)
- Less is more
- Fewer words – as long as it gets all the information across
- Small quantity of strong graphics – graphics are great on a website but not if they obscure what you are actually looking for
- Use meaningful titles; it will help people searching for information to know that they have found what they were looking for. People may have arrived at your web page from an internet search and so will need to understand exactly where they are on our website from your page title
- Make it obvious – people need to know at a glance what information your page covers, what it doesn’t cover and where to go for more

### Make it readable

Above all, write for the intended audience. So if you are writing for a member of the public don’t use jargon that you wouldn’t use in conversation.



## 10. Web

Some quick tips in writing for the web:

- Keep it simple
- Don't get lost in buzzwords
- Include frequent headings so the text is easy to skim to glean the key points
- Integrate links to other parts of the site in the text, rather than as a click here link
- Use meaningful photographs to accompany headings and paragraphs
- Don't preach or push. People don't come to hear the message we might want to push, they come to find information that is relevant to them

### Marketing your web pages

To find your web pages, users need to know (or find) your web address. To help them do this, make the website an integral part of your service area's communications and marketing strategy.

Because of the way our website creates pages, the direct links to your part of the website will not necessarily be very meaningful, for example it just wouldn't make sense to have the following URL on your marketing material: <http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=5769andL=0>. However, for marketing purposes, ICT can set up a URL shortcut, such as [www.powys.gov.uk/planning](http://www.powys.gov.uk/planning)

For more advice, contact the Communications Team.

### Search engine rankings - How to drive visitors to your web pages

In ranking a website, search engines pay a lot of attention to the actual content they find on a webpage. If you want people to find your web pages you must use the language on your pages that they will use on a search.

For example, if a person searched for 'bin collection' and our web pages only refer to 'refuse collection', our refuse collection pages will not appear on their search results.

Search engines also pay a lot of attention to page titles, ranking pages higher up results if the page title matches the search term. So be careful to use clear simple language, and never give 'Welcome to our service' as a page title.

### The customer is king

If we want our website to be successful at being found by people who search, we must use their keywords, not the council's. The customer, not the council, controls the message today.

Here's an example unconnected with local government. In a given month, thousands of people will search the internet for "low fares" but millions will search for "cheap flights". Low fares is airline industry language.





## 10. Web

Cheap flights is consumer language. If you want to be found, you must use the words of your customer.

The following tips will help:

- Stick with one clear idea for each webpage. People like communication that is clear and single-minded. So do search engines, which find it easier to rank a webpage that focuses on a particular theme than one that covers many themes
- Lead with your top keywords. It's not a murder mystery. Lead with the need and start every sentence with your customers' most important words. Unless the first couple of words in a sentence are compelling, people won't read on. Search engines are aware of this and give words closer to the beginning of the sentence a higher importance
- Use phrases and word combinations rather than single words. People are increasingly searching with two to three words because that's returning better results. If you're selling cheap flights to Dublin then you'll probably find that people are searching using the following combination "cheap flight Dublin"
- Repeat your top keywords. As a general rule, you should repeat your most important keywords in both your heading and summary, and roughly three times every hundred words thereafter. That's because if people see their keywords repeated they tend to feel that that piece of content is more relevant. Search engines recognise this
- Highlight sub-headings with the sub-heading format feature as this helps to break up the text on your pages and makes reading easier
- Use bold to highlight summary (introductory) text. Bold helps to emphasize the importance of this content, and search engines give content that is bolded an extra value. But don't use bold throughout your content. Bold can be useful when you really want to stress something but in general text using bold can make the writing feel pushy and preachy
- Writing quality links is one of the most undervalued web writing skills. Links are points of action and great web content facilitates action. Do not use low value (and inaccessible) link phrases such as "click here". Get your keywords into your links. Your links are like signposts and should give people as much information as possible about where they will go if they click

### Visitor statistics

Powys County Council use Google Analytics to monitor web use, for example how many people visit our site, what the top pages are, what people search for.

In addition, we subscribe to the Website Take Up Service. This is a web exit survey that provides us with monthly feedback from users of our website. This gives us the opportunity to find out what users of [www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk) think of the site, and whether it is providing the service they expect.





## 10. Web

An organisation can help control its image by presenting itself and its activities in a consistent way. This means making sure there are clear links in the way printed and electronic communications look.

A consistent corporate image applied to a website helps the user navigate the site and lends credibility to the origin and reliability of the information published. Importantly for any website it provides a consistent and professional image.

Our website is the public face of Powys County Council on the internet. When producing information to appear within the site we must ensure we are providing a high quality, professional and reliable service to the public.

Our content management system ensures all pages on our site follow the council's visual identity, usability and accessibility standards. From time to time service areas wish to develop their own identity and in line with that, a microsite to present their web pages to the public.

Where it is established that a clear business need exists for a service area to have its own look and feel, we will seek to enable service areas to develop a look and feel that fits within the corporate visual identity, serving both the service area's need to present their service in an appealing way, and the customers need to know that the information being presented can be trusted as being from an official source.

### Accessibility standards

First and foremost Powys County Council is a public service provider and so we have to provide information that is accessible to all sections of our community.

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) sets out rights for disabled people. Employers and service providers must not discriminate against a person for a reason connected with their disability. They must also make reasonable adjustments to the way in which they offer their services. This applies as much to websites as it does to ensure wheelchair access to council buildings is possible.

But accessibility is not just about ensuring that disabled people can access information. It is also about ensuring that the wide variety of users and devices can all gain access to information, thereby maximizing the potential audience and letting users experience the pages the way they choose to.

An accessible site is one that accommodates the full range of users. Designing for accessibility therefore means accepting that, for online information, there is:

- no standard information user
- no standard device for browsing information



## 10. Web

An accessible website does not exclude anybody due to:

- their abilities, or
- the method they choose to access the web

Accessible websites prioritise clear content, structure and ease of navigation over frilly aspects of design. However there is no reason they cannot be attractive to look at, nor are they prevented from using the latest web technologies, provided that all information is still accessible to users.

### 'Have Your Say' web pages

To aid co-ordination and promote consultations to the wider public, the consultation officers are responsible for the corporate 'Have Your Say' web pages. These are dedicated to helping provide residents with a central point at which to view any council or partner consultations. These pages should be used by departments to flag up their current consultation plans which are then linked to their own web pages.

Consultation officers can work with officers to write and agree copy for the 'Have Your Say' page, build supporting on-line surveys for consultations which are posted on-line and ensure they are translated to comply with the Welsh Language Act. The officers will also help to ensure any consultation questions are clear, concise and will provide useful data to the officers conducting the exercise.

### Citizens panel

The Citizens Panel was established in 2001 to gather the views of a representative section of Powys residents when the council wished to consult on its plans and priorities.

The panel was refreshed in 2008 to provide opportunities for new panellists to take part. The panel is voluntary and members receive a newsletter and survey package two or three times a year by post or email.

Any council department or service can use the panel to help shape their services or policies.

The panel has contributed to many plans and strategies since inception in 2001, including: housing strategy, policy of licensing taxis in Powys, bus timetables, anti-bullying strategy and Red Kite residents magazine. Panellists have also given their views on Dyfed Powys Police surveys.

For more information on the citizen panel and how it could help you, contact the Communications Team.



## 11. Consultation and engagement

To consult is to 'seek information or advice from a person' or 'seek permission or approval from a person for a proposed action'.

As a council we produce a multitude of strategies and policies. These set out our approach to service delivery on which we consult in various ways.

The typical approach to consultation is to produce a draft document and then circulate or publicise it and invite comments within a given timeframe. Another approach is to engage residents early in a process via focus groups or face to face interviews and workshops and utilise their comments to shape a future policy or improve a current service.

Depending on the topic and the method used to consult people, the result can be either a handful of in-depth interviews or a huge influx of comments which then need to be carefully analysed before a final decision is taken. Some consultations require a lot of forward planning and reports produced for a Cabinet decision. Some smaller consultations can offer simple solutions to service issues and be implemented quite quickly.

Good consultation involves a number of factors including:

- Consideration of what it is you are consulting on, what limitations there are in terms of public involvement and if there are any specific questions you want answered
- How you will publicise the consultation to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to take part
- What you are going to do with the responses and how these will inform any final plans
- How you will provide good feedback to those who take part so that people know the outcome of the consultation and feel the exercise was genuine

The Communications Team is able to give help and advice to all officers at any stage of a consultation project. Seeking advice or support early can improve the results of your consultation.

Officers can also access a free resource via the citizen and community engagement toolkit. This was produced by officers as part of a local services board project and gives a wealth of ideas and key principles around good engagement which officers should consider. See page 1055 of the intranet.



# 11. Consultation and engagement

## Market research

Powys County Council undertakes a key piece of corporate market research annually, the Residents Survey.

The Residents Survey gives services a valuable insight into the views of over a thousand residents around their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with 30 key front line services such as primary education, refuse collection, street lighting, libraries and more. Service managers use this data when writing their service plans for the year ahead and the data is used as a key performance measure.

The report is published both on the intranet (page 5548) and the public website. Service specific reports can be developed from the data. Please contact the Communications Team for more information.



## 12. Contact details

Name and job title	Phone Number	Email address
<b>Anya Richards</b> Senior Communications Manager	01597 826089	anya.richards@powys.gov.uk
<b>John Evans</b> Communications Manager	01597 826377	john.m.evans@powys.gov.uk
<b>Lee Evans</b> Assistant Communications Officer	01597 826023	lee.evans@powys.gov.uk
<b>Emma Savage</b> Internal Communications Officer	01597 826728	emma.savage@powys.gov.uk
<b>Michelle Wozencraft</b> Communications and Marketing Officer	01597 826975	michelle.wozencraft@powys.gov.uk
<b>Sue Glenn</b> Corporate Consultation Officer	01597 826043	sue.glenn@powys.gov.uk
<b>John Thomas</b> Customer Services Consultation Co-ordinator	0870 1923755	john.thomas@powys.gov.uk
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<b>Emily Lovell</b> Communications Graduate Trainee	01597 82 6847	emily.lovell@powys.gov.uk
<b>Chas Futcher</b> Design Officer	01597 82 6208	chas.futcher@powys.gov.uk
<b>Marie McDonald</b> Design Officer	01938 55 1311	marie.mcdonald@powys.gov.uk



## 13. Referenced documents

<b>Documnet</b>	<b>Intranet Page</b>
<b>Corporate Style Guide</b>	3575
<b>Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity</b>	295
<b>Photo consent form</b>	3292
<b>Citizen and Community Engagement toolkit</b>	1055
<b>Powys Media Protocol</b>	6009
<b>Social Media Guidelines</b>	5918
<b>Residents Survey 2009/10</b>	1055



## 14. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Communications plan pro-forma

Appendix 2 - Design brief pro-forma



Communications plan title:

Background information:

Communication aim:

Communication objectives:

Target audience (stakeholders):

Key messages:

Communication strategies:

Communication tactics and activity schedule:

Activity	Description	Audience	Outcome	Cost	Lead officer	Timings / frequency
Posters	Information posters advertising changes and start dates of new service.	Staff Members Residents	Confirm and advertise changes to services.	£600	KW	April 2011

Evaluation methods:





**Design brief pro-forma**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Officer or manager responsible for sign-off: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost centre and account code: \_\_\_\_\_

Delivery address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Target audience:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key message:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of marketing collateral (leaflet/flyer/booklet/poster/etc): \_\_\_\_\_

Size (DL/A5/A4/A3/etc): \_\_\_\_\_

Colour/black and white/mono/spot colour: \_\_\_\_\_

Paper weight and finish (speak to designers for advice): \_\_\_\_\_

Quantities: \_\_\_\_\_ Quotes obtained and budget agreed:

Final (signed-off) copy supplied in both Welsh and English:

Photos/images (including logos other than Powys County Council) supplied:

If needed, photos consent forms complete and signed:

Timescales/dates: Brief given to design: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign-off: \_\_\_\_\_

Delivery: \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss deadlines and timescales with the designer and print manager. Remember to factor in time for print, any further translations and distribution. Decide when you need the publication and work backwards to work out what needs to be done by when.

Further notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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