

Cabinet

Report Title	Communications Strategy
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 14 January 2026
Report Author	Matthew More, Head of Communications
Lead Officer	Assistant Chief Executive
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Leader of the Council
Why is this a key decision?	
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Open
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	
Appendices (if any)	1. Communications Strategy

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Communications Strategy sets out a whole council approach to communicating with residents, our staff, partners and stakeholders, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for our community.

1.2 Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

2.1 Approve and adopt the Communications Strategy as set out in the Appendix.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 Sandwell Council has been through rapid improvements in recent years and this is now being reflected in the latest residents' survey. Satisfaction with how the council runs things has increased significantly this year, up from 65% in 2024 to 72% in 2025 and sits well above the LGA benchmark of 56%. Trust in the council also remains well above LGA benchmarks at 65% against the benchmark of 50%.
- 3.2 Making sure residents are informed is key to maintaining trust and satisfaction, and the proportion of residents feeling that the council keeps them well informed has increased this year, to 65% compared with 55% last year.
- 3.3 Effective communications is central to achieving the authority's ambition to become an outstanding council. Good communications connects services to the residents that use and rely on them in their daily lives. It is crucial in building trust in the council so that it can deliver on our aspirations for Sandwell; bringing together residents, the workforce, businesses and partners around a shared vision. A healthy local democracy is built upon local councillors who are kept informed to fulfil their role as community leaders, and through transparently communicated decision-making.
- 3.4 The Communications Strategy sets out our approach to effective communications. It is a strategy for the whole council - to be led by the Communications Service - and sets out how the authority wants to deliver its communications activity so that it is fully focused on its agreed priorities and presents consistently as a confident and coordinated organisation.
- 3.5 The strategy sets out what a strategic approach to communications looks like, with clear communications priorities emerging from a place-based vision for the borough, and the Council Plan. Business plans are developed annually to deliver the objectives in the Council Plan. Communications priorities flow from this, with resources focused on delivering campaign plans that support these priorities.
- 3.6 Reaching the right audience, at the right time and in the right way can help deliver better outcomes and inform people to influence positive behaviour change. To achieve this, the Communications Service will coordinate activity across the council to build campaign plans focused on the agreed priorities. As the strategy is implemented, communications activity will be based on research and insight, wherever possible, to identify target audiences. The council's channels will be data-led, using evidence to understand and evaluate what content works and what impact it is making.
- 3.7 To be effective communications must be consistent, and the strategy sets out how this can be achieved based on a clearly articulated vision that sets out the authority's ambitions for the borough; an organisational narrative and set of key messages that explain the organisation's objectives, and a distinctive brand so that audiences are clear on the council's values and what the authority stands for.

4 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 The Council could choose to continue without a Communications Strategy. However, this is not recommended as the benefits of taking a strategic approach to communications would not be realised. A strategic approach to communications is intended to ensure that the resources dedicated to communications are focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, supporting the authority's best value duty.

5. Consultation

5.1 The annual residents' survey asks questions about how residents access information about the council. This insight has been used to develop the Communications Strategy.

5.2 No direct consultation on the strategy has been carried out as it does not directly impact services delivered to residents.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The strategy sets out a change in the way communications in Sandwell is delivered, and there are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the Communications Strategy. The Communications Service will lead on delivering the strategy within current resources.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

7.1 The Local Government Association recommend that local councils take a strategic approach to communications, stating, "communications without strategy does not work." Whilst it is not a statutory requirement, approval for the Communications Strategy is sought from Cabinet to ensure that the authority's communications approach is open and transparent.

8. Risks

8.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

9.1 The council cannot meet its objectives if it does not communicate effectively with residents in ways that are relevant, easy to understand, accessible, timely and accurate. Whilst an Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed because this report and the adoption of a Communications Strategy does not directly impact service delivery, the principles set out in the strategy are intended to ensure that the authority's communications approach is accessible to all.

10. Other Relevant Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications on other council priorities from this report. However, a more strategic and effective approach to communications is

intended to support delivery of all council priorities and positively impact outcomes.

11. Background Documents

Appendix 1: Communications Strategy

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes:-

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.

12.1 The Communications Strategy underpins all of the strategic themes set out in the Council Plan by ensuring that the authority's finite communications resources are prioritised on the work that will have the greatest impact. The Council Plan sets out the key organisational priorities. Business plans are developed annually to deliver the objectives in our Council Plan. The organisation's communications priorities flow from this, with resources focused on delivering campaign plans that support these priorities.

12.2 Operating as One Council, One Team is central to achieving our ambitions, and the Communications Service needs to be helping drive forward further improvements as a strategic enabler within the council's 'engine room'.

Internal communications is critical to achieving the ambition to become an outstanding council, helping to clearly articulate the organisation's purpose and vision so that staff understand how their role fits in to delivering better outcomes for residents. It also helps to break down siloes, making connections between services and growing understanding of how all staff contribute to improving residents' quality of life.