



The way we all communicate as a society is evolving at a faster rate than ever before, making it more challenging than ever to reach our customers efficiently and at a time and place that is convenient for them. This strategy has been written with these challenges in mind and aims to keep our communications running efficiently, lawfully and accurately in step with the changes. I would like to congratulate officers on their work in pulling together this document.



Councillor Maureen Cook, Executive Member for Culture, Sport, Partnerships & Communications

This is the council's third Communications Strategy, setting out the strategic direction for communication over the next three years.

Since the previous communications strategy was published in 2013, the communications landscape has changed dramatically; there has been a dramatic shift away from traditional news sources towards digital and social media networks, with more people than ever downloading information on demand using smart phones¹.

The growth of information on demand is staggering:



77% of all adults in **2018** had used the **internet "on the go"** using a mobile phone, smartphone, laptop, tablet or handheld device. Almost all adults aged **25 to 34 years (97%)** have accessed **the internet "on the go"**, compared with only **39%** of those aged **65 years and over**³



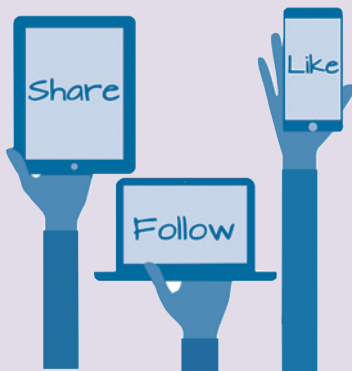
² **89%** of adults in Great Britain used the **internet** at least weekly in **2018**, up from **88%** in **2017** and **51%** in **2006**



More people in the UK now read **news** on their **PC or personal mobile** than in print, while **85%** of people get their news from **television**. **51%**⁴ of people with online access use **social media** as a news source⁵



Since **2006**, the percentage of adults who use the **internet daily** has grown from **35%**, to **86%** in **2018**. Furthermore, the proportion of those who had not used the internet in the last three months has fallen from **40%** in **2006**, to **9%** in **2018**⁶



Social media use by internet users has increased by **224%** since **2007** - nearly three quarters (**72%**) of internet users now have a **social media profile**, compared to **22%** in **2007**. **81%** of this audience uses social media at least **once a day**, up from **30%** in **2007**⁷

^{1, 6 & 7} GCS Government Communication Plan 2015-2016

^{2 & 3} Office of National Statistics, Internet access - households and individuals, Great Britain: 2018

⁴ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism research 2016

⁵ GCS Government Communication Plan 2015-2016

In this changing landscape, it's essential we communicate and listen to the views of our residents to ensure we meet the communication needs and demands of our customers, members, partners and staff. At the same time, ensuring we provide value for money and efficient methods of communicating with our audiences must remain central to our efforts on behalf of the council.

As we shift towards a greater share of digital communications, we must remember that while digital communication is a cost effective way of reaching many customers quickly, not everyone is on the internet; many of our customers do not have easy access to technology or prefer traditional forms of communication. Our communication methods must be accessible to everyone.

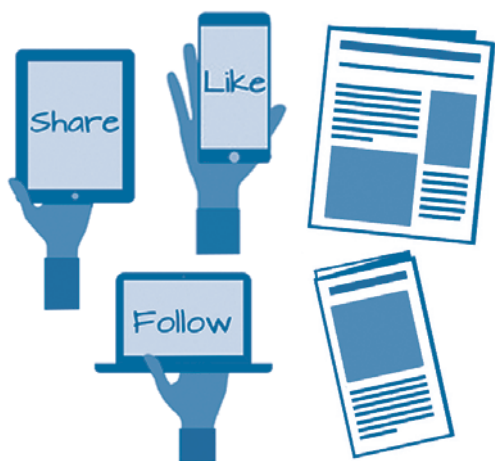
According to the Office of National Statistics data for 2018, 7% of adults in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland have never accessed the internet. While that number is shrinking every year, it is still significant and represents 6,160 adults in Hinckley and Bosworth.

The three ambitions of this strategy are to:

- 1** Inform people about the services the council provides so that residents and businesses make the best possible use of council services, ensuring that our online services are both user-friendly and accessible to use.
- 2** Show that the council is providing value for money in what we do. As well as ensuring that our customers use the services provided for them as efficiently and as effectively as we can, we want to ensure that customers value the services they receive from the council.
- 3** Be accountable to local people. We will build trust by listening to the views of all our residents and representatives of local people, act upon them and tell them what action has been taken.

Our main areas of focus for this strategy will be:

- 1** Shifting more of our communication activity online by increasing the use of e-mail marketing, e-newsletters and further developing our presence on social media.
- 2** Making our communications and promotional campaigns insight-driven - based on what we know our customers want and where we can reach them.
- 3** Providing a professional media office service to our media partners and to the authority's own service areas.
- 4** Ensuring that whatever method we use to reach our customers, our communication continues to be timely, informative, engaging, accessible and factual.



How residents find out about and keep up to date with HBBC activities:

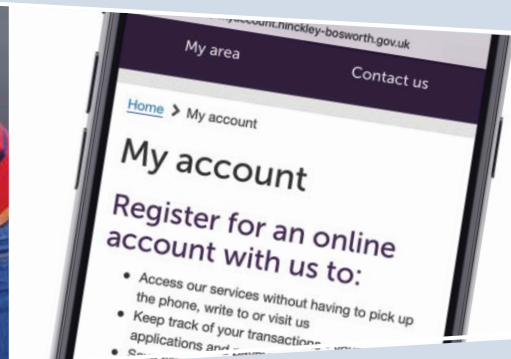
- 25%** say the **Borough Bulletin** (**4%** decrease in one year)
- 16%** say **local newspapers** (**2%** decrease in one year)
- 14%** say **social media** and the **council website** (**4%** increase in one year)
- 15%** say **leaflets** and **posters** (no change)

What we will do:

Focus one:

Shifting more of our communication activity online by increasing the use of e-mail marketing, e-newsletters and developing our presence on social media.

- We will grow our social media audiences, with the aim of achieving 10,700 Facebook page likes, equivalent to 10% of our resident population for the borough liking the HBBC main page by 2021 and Twitter subscribers to 6,300 by 2021.
- We will develop and enhance our social media content to increase its reach and boost engagement with our residents.
- We will continue to test paid boosts on Facebook to increase the reach of key events and messages.
- While Facebook and Twitter are currently the most used social media channels, this may change during the life of this strategy so we will continue to monitor emerging social media channels and grasp the opportunity to join in important conversations where they are happening locally.
- We will aim for digital by default – ensure online services are so easy to access and view online that it becomes the channel of choice.
- Continue to develop e-newsletters, maximising the potential of Mailchimp and My Account to enable customers to subscribe to regular email updates from services that interest them.
- We will make the best use of new and emerging technologies such as accessible animation and video to make sure we are reaching all our audiences.
- We will work with Leicestershire County Council to offer training and support to those people who do not currently access the internet but are interested in doing so.



Focus two:

Making our communications and promotional campaigns insight-driven - based on what we know our customers want and where we can reach them

- We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our public relations activity, monitoring media coverage, social media reach and, where appropriate, attendance at events to evaluate and understand who we are reaching.
- We will identify the scope and frequency of customer insight and consultation arrangements across all service areas and understand how this insight can better drive communications and promotional activities.
- We will research and identify best practice customer consultation and customer insight arrangements in 'similar' district councils to identify any further potential to use insight to drive communication improvements.

Focus three:

Providing a professional media office service to our media partners and to the authority's own service areas

- We will continue to provide a regular flow of news releases suitable for local, regional and specialist media outlets. We will supply ready to use images and web links with each news release to help to maximise coverage in print titles and for digital audiences.
- We will maximise media coverage of council events and other key newsworthy activity by supplying ready to use copy and images as soon after the event as possible.
- We will continue to provide a reactive media service, responding to incoming media enquiries to ensure they are answered in a factual and timely fashion.
- We will proactively challenge and rebut misinformed and inaccurate news articles to ensure media coverage properly reflects facts.
- We will continue to produce four editions of the Borough Bulletin per year, enhancing and tweaking content and style to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders.
- We will ensure the Borough Bulletin continues to be a popular way to receive information about the council, as measured by the annual resident satisfaction survey.



Focus four:

Ensuring that whatever method we use to reach our customers, our communication continues to be timely, informative, engaging, accessible and factual.

Our communication and consultation activity will continue to be guided by the following principles which were established in 2006 to ensure that what we do achieves our ambitions:

- We will ensure all communication is written in plain English so that it is clear, concise and accessible to everyone.
- We will be open and transparent
- We will be clear about what we are consulting on and tell people how their views can influence decisions.
- We will publish the results of each consultation and tell people how we have used the findings.

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