



7 March 2019

INFORMING AND ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES TASK GROUP – 14 MARCH 2019

The next meeting of the Informing and Engaging Our Communities Task Group will be held at 6pm on Thursday 14 March 2019 in Committee Room 2 at the Town Hall, Rugby.

Adam Norburn
Executive Director

A G E N D A

PART 1 – PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Minutes – to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2019.
2. Apologies – to receive apologies for absence from the meeting.
3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of:

(a) non-pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors;

(b) pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors;
and

(c) notice under Section 106 Local Government Finance Act 1992 – non-payment of Community Charge or Council Tax.

Note: Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their interests at the commencement of the meeting (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a pecuniary interest the Member must withdraw from the room unless one of the exceptions applies.

Membership of Warwickshire County Council or any Parish Council is classed as a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct. A Member does not need to declare this interest unless the Member chooses to speak on a matter relating to their membership. If the Member does not wish to speak on the matter, the Member may still vote on the matter without making a declaration.

4. Review report – to consider the draft review report (attached), draw conclusions and develop recommendations to Cabinet
5. Next steps – to agree the process for finalising the review report and the reporting schedule

PART 2 – EXEMPT INFORMATION

There is no business involving exempt information.

Membership of the task group:

Councillors Keeling (Chair), Bearne, Douglas, Claire Edwards, Gillias, Lewis and Srivastava

If you have any general queries with regard to this agenda please contact Veronika Beckova, Democratic Services Officer (01788 533591 or e-mail veronika.beckova@rugby.gov.uk). Any specific queries concerning reports should be directed to the listed contact officer.

If you wish to attend the meeting and have any special requirements for access please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.



REVIEW OF INFORMING AND ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

March 2019

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3 Methodology

4 Conclusions

Appendices

1 – Rugby Borough Council Communications Strategy 2014

2 – Rugby Borough Council Web Content Standards 'Golden Rules'

3 – Pages 42 and 43 of the 'New Conversations' LGA Guide to Engaging Communities

TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The task group consisted of the following members:

Councillor **Dale Keeling** (Chair)
Councillor **Andrew Bearne**
Councillor **Tim Douglas**
Councillor **Claire Edwards**
Councillor **Anthony Gillias**
Councillor **Bill Lewis**
Councillor **Ramesh Srivastava**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The task group would like to thank the following organisations for their valuable contribution to this review:

- Oliver Gallant (Head of Digital, Quidem Digital)
- Jo Billings (Regional Events Director, Quidem Digital)

The task group are also thankful to the following officers who have supported them throughout the review process:

- Matthew Deaves (Communication, Consultation and Information Manager)

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

To be written by the Chair

Councillor Dale Keeling
Chair

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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The task group proposes the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

1.1 Alignment with the Corporate Strategy

The review relates to the following corporate priorities:

CORPORATE RESOURCES: Ensure that the council works efficiently and effectively
COMMUNITITES AND HOMES: Deliver digitally-enabled services that residents can access

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2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 Background

At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop on 8 March 2017, members considered a proposal for a review about communication, engagement and public consultation. The overview and scrutiny chairs agreed this review should be included in the work programme for 2017/18.

A one-page strategy for this review was agreed Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2017. Due to lead officer's other work commitments, the review was delayed until 2018/19. A task group was appointed and began its work in June 2018.

2.2 The One Page Strategy

The 'one-page strategy' is the name given to the scoping document for the review. It defines the task and the improvements being aimed for and how these are going to be achieved. The review's one-page strategy, revised by the task group at its inaugural meeting on 21 June 2018 and subsequently approved by Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2018, is as follows:

What is the broad topic area?

How can we involve communities in decisions that affect them, in ways that suit them?

Can we provide information and tools to council teams and to Members, so that they can inform and engage communities where relevant?

What is the specific topic area?

The last five years has seen an explosion in the use of social media and the consumption of mobile content, resulting in a shift in user habits and expectations.

These new habits have also provided new opportunities for very targeted content placement, reaching specific communities at relatively low cost.

The review will look at including a range of new media that members and relevant officers can use, together with a refreshed package of traditional engagement techniques.

It will include some analysis of when it may be appropriate to use each technique, depending on the objectives of the engagement exercise.

What should be considered?

- Relevant best practice from other authorities, and the Local Government Association
- New trends in technology
- Changes in community expectations
- Resources
- Case studies

Who shall we consult?

- Communications, Consultation and Information Team
- Members
- Relevant officers
- Residents who do not use social media
- Residents' associations
- Business community
- Schools
- Warwickshire County Council
- Parish councils

How long should it take?

Around six months, depending on the amount of support needed.

What will be the outcome?

- Understanding of a variety of methods to involve members and residents on issues that affect them.
- Recommendations to cabinet that will ensure decisions on budget proposals presented to council have been informed by timely and relevant community engagement.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The task group met four times between June 2018 and March 2019. The evidence that the group considered included:

- Scene setting through the one-page strategy providing background and context for the review
- Communication Strategy 2014
- Web Content Standards 'Golden Rules'
- LGA Guide to Engaging Communities 'New Conversations'
- Waste Behaviour Change Communications in Warwickshire
- Breakdown of communications channels available to the Council and their use
- Presentation from Quidem Digital explaining the company's background and what learning from their previous campaigns can be offered to the Council
- The Council's recycling campaign and animation
- Data on recycling/waste collection rates

3.2 Background

The last five years had seen an explosion in the use of social media and the consumption of mobile content, resulting in a shift in user habits and expectations.

These new habits had also provided new opportunities for very targeted content placement, reaching specific communities at relatively low cost.

3.3 The Council's Communications Channels

The task group received a presentation setting the scene for the review outlining the communications channels available to the Council and their use:

3.3.1 News Releases and Media Relations

News releases and media relations were available to:

- all councillors
- all parish councils that have opted in
- Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC)
- relevant internal contacts
- local, regional, national or trade media (as relevant)
- the Council's website and social media (as appropriate)

Parish councils were periodically contacted by officers to see whether they wish to be added to the distribution list. Parish councils that were on the distribution list may use the council's new releases as they see fit.

3.3.2 The Council's Official Website

The website was designed to help residents 'get things done' and engage. The secondary purpose of the website was to inform, especially in relation to getting things done. A

strategy was in place to simplify the user journey and remove barriers to engagement. The website was designed to be viewed on mobile devices.

3.3.3 Social media

Through social media platforms, officers were able to breakdown users by gender, age, country of origin and other characteristics available. Facebook had also launched a new feature that allowed users to translate posts and comments on Facebook pages into their native language.

The Council had seven corporate Facebook pages, two partnership pages and the Mayor's page. The Council also had 10 official Twitter accounts including two officer accounts.

Images and video amplify reach and click-throughs.

3.3.4 Email

Email was actively used by the Communications Team, the Benn Hall, the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum and the Rugby Visitor Centre. Email opening rates were up to 70 per cent comparing to the industry average of 16 per cent.

Use of bulk email software reduced risk of Data Protection breach and provided analytics data. Various lists were in use.

Email also allowed for A/B testing. A/B testing was a way to compare two versions of a single variable and determining which of the two variants was more effective.

3.3.5 Letters

Letters were the most expensive means of communication. There was very little data around the effectiveness of direct mail.

This form of engagement was best utilised when targeting a particular area or a topic of interest, for example: a local plan consultation.

3.3.6 Leaflets and other print media

Leaflets and other print media were not a preferred choice of communication as they were expensive and difficult to keep up to date. Information on the website were available in a print media on request.

3.3.7 Recent Engagement with Communities

The council had recently engaged with communities on the following:

- Local Plan
- Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders
- Improvements to the Whitehall Recreation Ground
- Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum

Each campaign was targeted and focused which attracted people that had an interest in the area and/or they were directly affected. Not all members of public want to be involved in consultation.

3.4 Waste Behaviour Change Communications in Warwickshire

3.4.1 Introduction

Waste and recycling behaviour change communications are led by Warwickshire County Council on behalf of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership. There are 2.5 full time equivalent communications officers working on waste communications in Warwickshire.

3.4.2 Behaviour Change Communications

The team has highlighted the following in their update to the December 2018 meeting of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership:

- There are around 9500 subscribers from across the county to the “Warwickshire Recycles” email list, receiving regular updates on waste and recycling. This compares to around 15,000 subscribers to Rugby Borough Council’s garden waste collection service who we are able to email about related matters.
- The “Slim Your Bin” 4-week behaviour change training programme has recruited 728 participants from across Warwickshire in two years. The campaign asks participants to report on various activities such as litter picking, checking they’ve used the right bin etc through a web portal to win points and rewards. There is no verification that the submitted activities have occurred.
- The team delivered recycling talks to 8 schools in Warwickshire in the autumn terms.
- 5542 households have signed up to the In to Win programme, run by Daventry District Council on behalf of Northamptonshire Waste Partnership and delivered across Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. Rewards can be used at one of eighteen different organisations in Northamptonshire, but Warwickshire participants are limited to using rewards at Warwick Castle or as an “All for One” voucher.
- The team regularly use social media, with 1030 followers on Facebook and 795 on twitter.

While these communications are identified as “behaviour change”, the Partnership has not published any evidence linking these outputs to the Warwickshire Waste Partnership’s strategic objectives to reduce the amount of waste generated and increase the proportion of waste recycled or composted. Reported measures are based on participation and activity, rather than waste reduction, recycling or composting rates.

In addition to these Partnership communications, borough and district councils in Warwickshire have promoted their own campaigns. Most districts and boroughs limit their activity to supporting the Partnership activity (above), but Stratford District Council has recently completed its first year of a social media campaign promoting recycling, with a detailed focus on what material goes in which bin.

To understand whether these behaviour change campaigns have had any impact it is necessary to consider data showing the amount of waste collected, recycled and composted.

3.4.3 Waste Composition Analysis

Warwickshire County Council commissioned waste compositional analysis of waste presented by households across the county. Three samples of 50 households were taken in each Waste Collection Authority. Households were selected from a range of demographic profiles across the County; so the results from each survey could be weighted to provide an annual picture of the residual waste being collected within individual Waste Collection Authorities, as well as across the County. This was carried out for both residual waste and bio waste.

The analysis was undertaken by MEL Research Ltd using accepted methodology to produce statistically relevant weighted results to allow comparison across all authorities and smooth out potential for seasonal variation. The findings were presented to the Warwickshire Waste Partnership in December 2018 and published in January 2019.

North Warks	Stratford	Rugby	Nuneaton	Warwick	County Average
3.83	4.04	3.88	3.87	4.14	3.95

Table 1: Residual waste generated (kg/hh/wk)

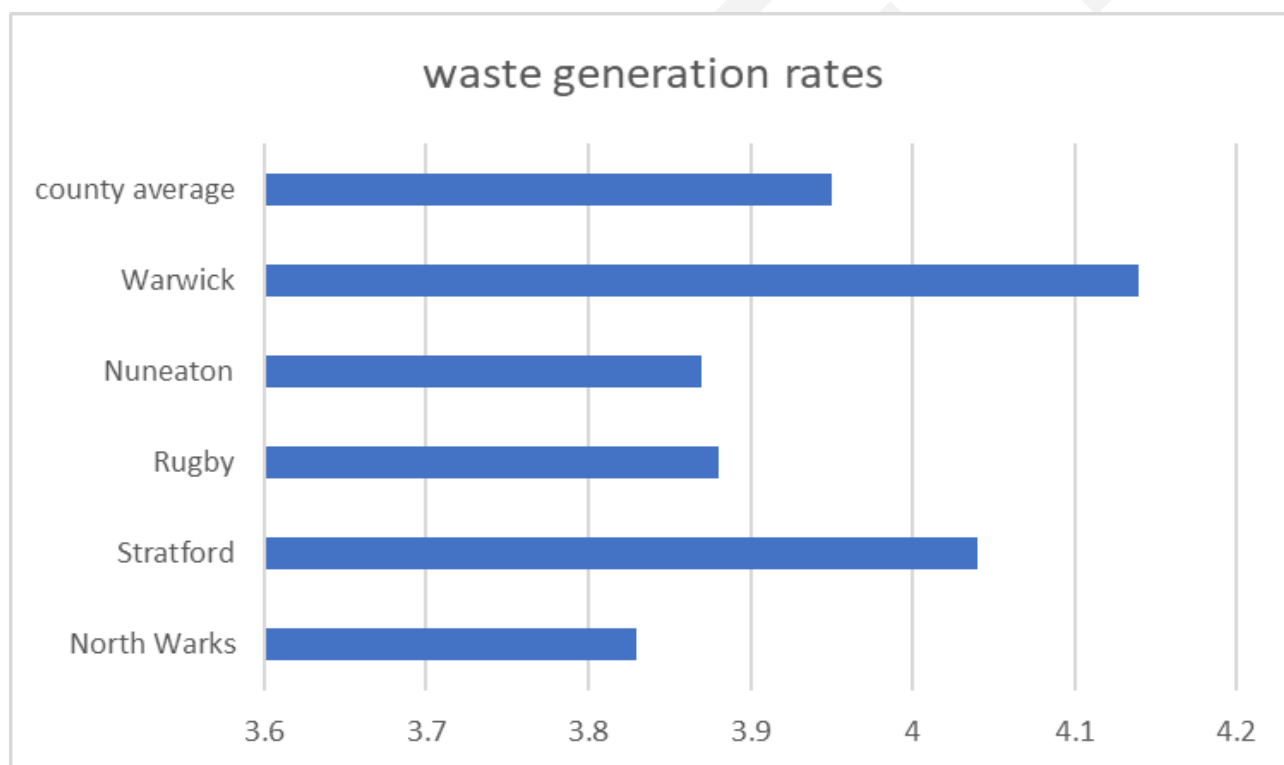


Chart 1: Residual waste generated (kg/hh/wk)

	North Warks	Stratford	Rugby	Nuneaton	Warwick	County Average
RECYCLABLE GARDEN WASTE	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.05
RECYCLABLE FOOD WASTE	1.24	1.30	1.22	1.27	1.35	1.28
RECYCLABLE OTHER ORGANICS	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.13	0.07	0.07
TOTAL DRY RECYCLABLE	0.44	0.63	0.47	0.66	0.74	0.60
TOTAL ORGANIC RECYCLABLE	1.37	1.37	1.27	1.45	1.46	1.39
TOTAL RECYCLABLE	1.81	2.00	1.74	2.11	2.20	1.99

Table 2: Contaminants in black bin (kg/hh/wk)

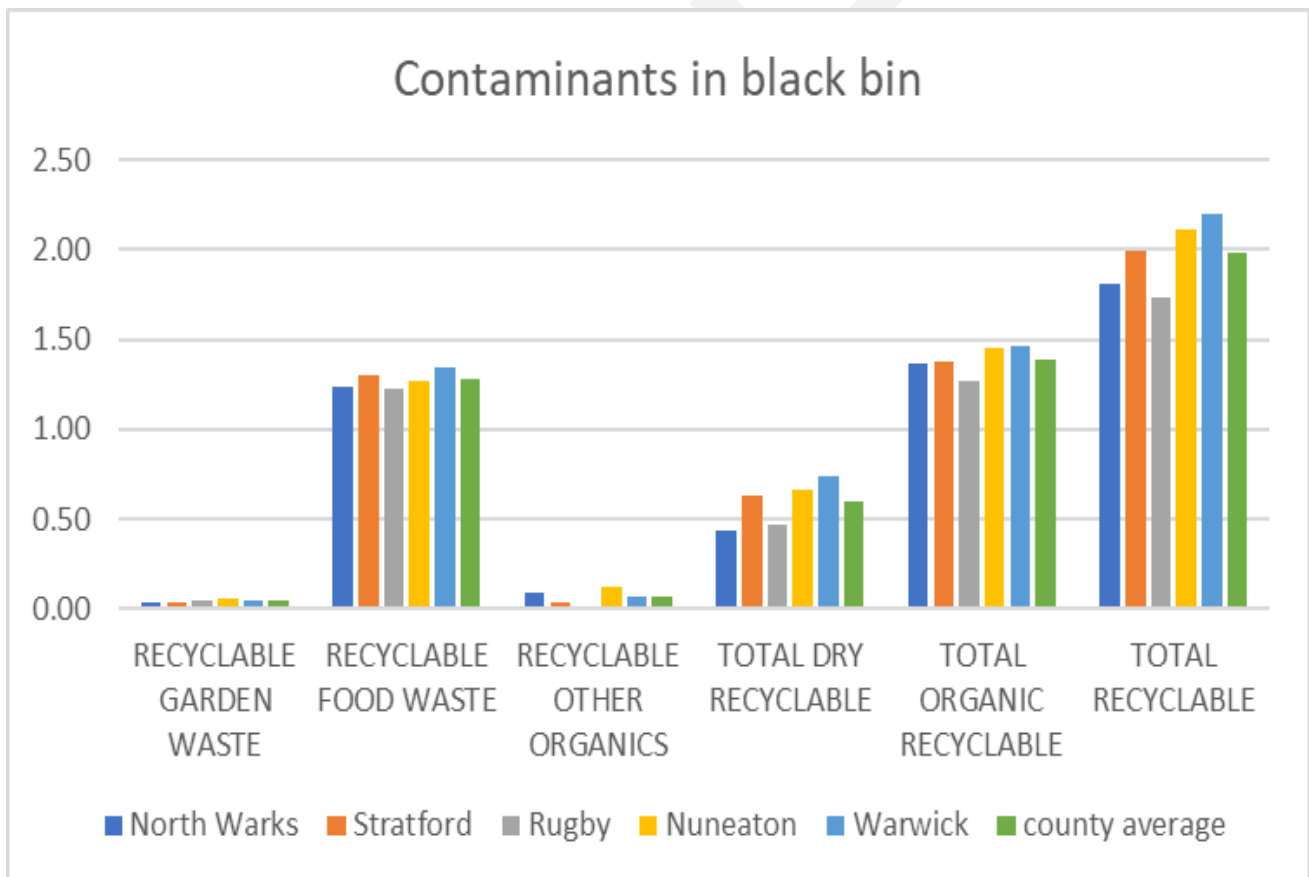


Chart 2: Contaminants in black bin (kg/hh/wk)

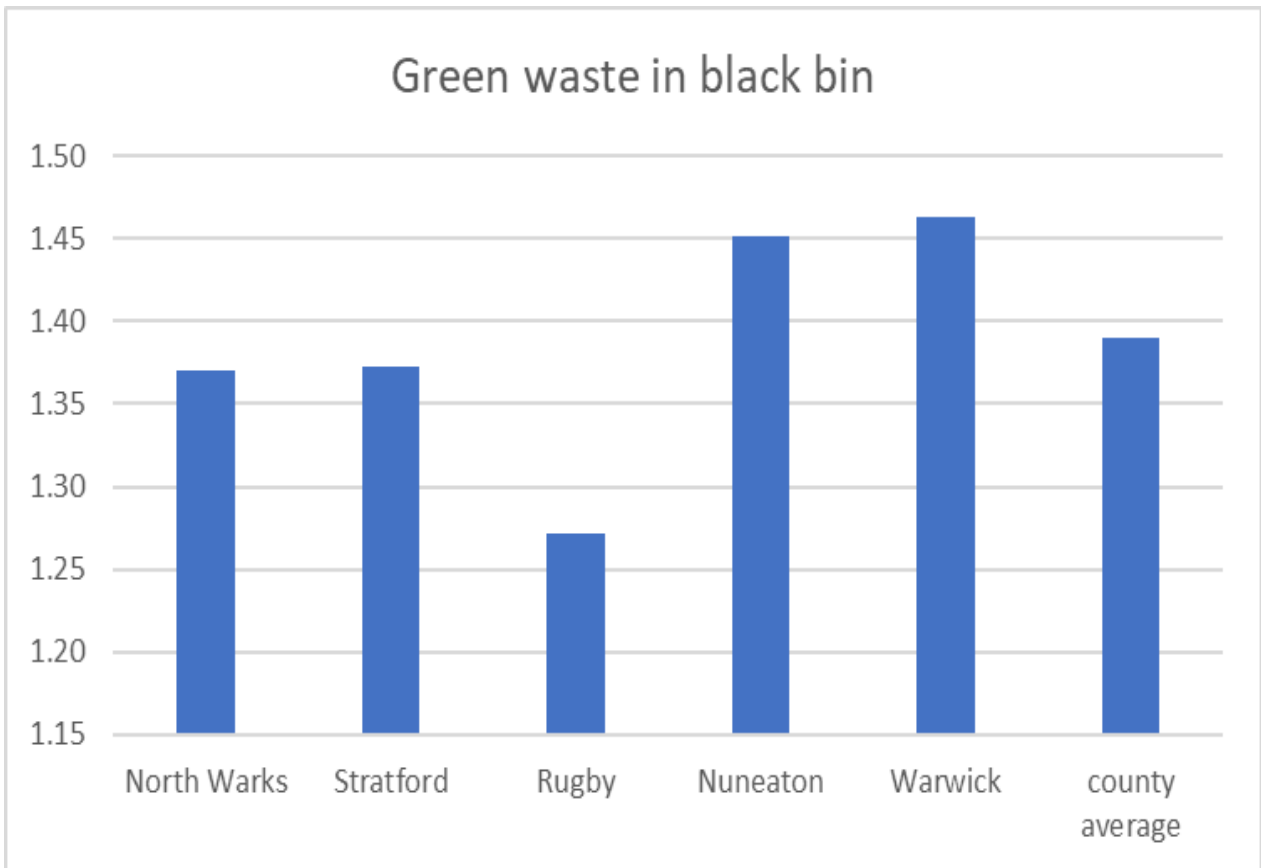


Chart 3: Green waste in black bin (kg/hh/wk)

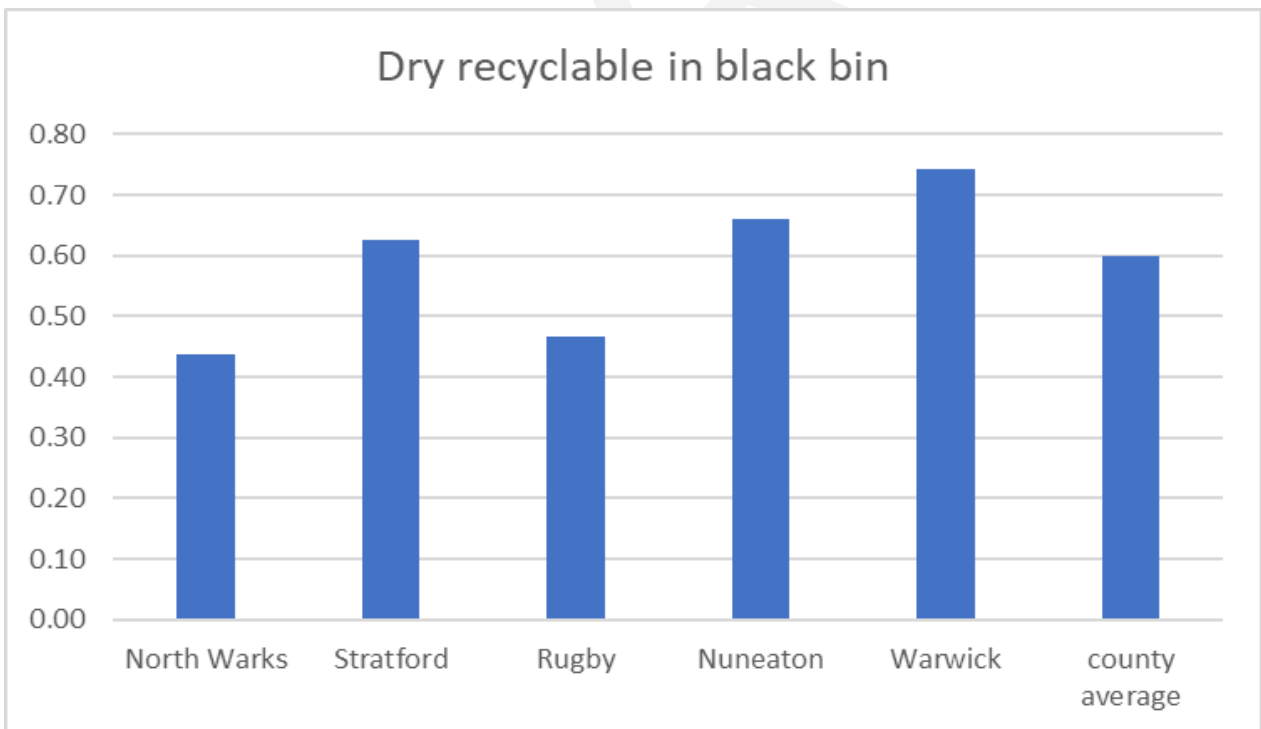


Chart 4: Recyclables in black bin (kg/hh/wk)

	North Warks	Stratford	Rugby	Nuneaton	Warwick	County Average
NEWSPAPER AND LINERS	0.28%	0.10%	0.25%	0.39%	0.20%	0.20%
GARDEN VEGETATION	69.88%	72.19%	71.41%	68.92%	71.71%	71.32%
FOOD WASTE	7.45%	6.28%	7.30%	8.29%	7.39%	7.08%
PET BEDDING	3.10%	1.54%	2.61%	3.52%	1.93%	2.20%
CONTAMINATION	19.29%	19.89%	18.43%	18.88%	18.78%	19.20%

Table 3: Composition of green bin (%)

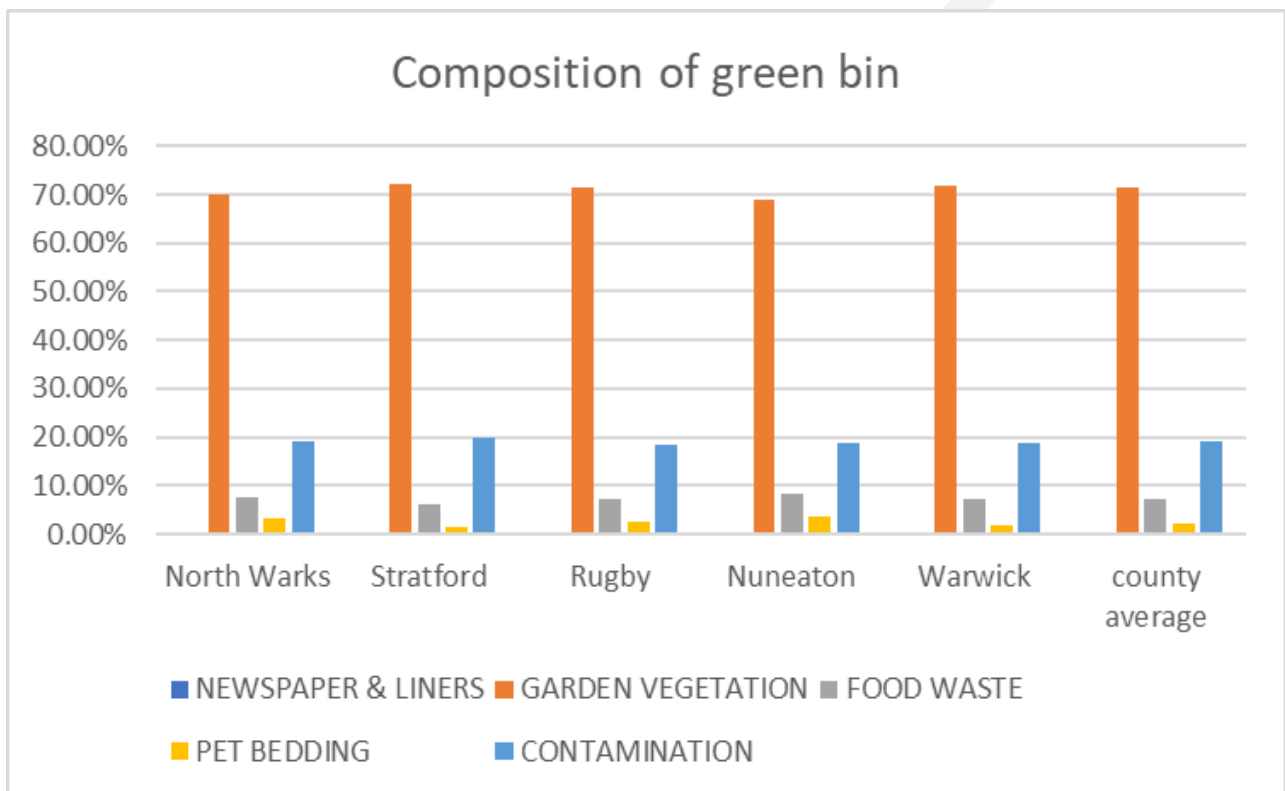


Chart 5: Composition of green bin (%)

3.4.5 Analysis

The charts show that, despite the absence of any recent communications to borough council residents beyond those sent to all county residents, the contamination rate is low and scope for behaviour change is low.

The data shows that there is no clear link between the Warwickshire Waste Partnership behaviour change communications and behaviour change. The data further shows that the move to a chargeable garden waste service has not increased the amount of contamination in the black refuse bin and that the contamination rate is favourable compared to other districts and boroughs.

Nevertheless, contamination does increase costs and any behaviour change that can be evidenced from any future campaign will result in both an evidenced reduction in the amount of waste collected or an increase in the amount recycled or composted, and savings to either the waste collection authority, the waste disposal authority, or both.

3.4.6 Conclusion

To maximise the learning from the campaign it is proposed that a completely different approach is taken, and that none of the methods used above are repeated. This will mean that there will be guaranteed learning points from the campaign, whether or not any behaviour change is evidenced.

The proposed behaviour change campaign should report on the following measures:

- Total waste collected (provides baseline to which following measures can be indexed in case where total waste collected rises)
- Amount of dry recyclable in black bin (change in quantity is evidence of behaviour change)
- Amount of compostable waste in black bin (change in quantity is evidence of behaviour change)

The findings of the analysis showed that Rugby compared extremely well to the rest of the county and had the lowest contamination levels across waste collected, recycled and composted.

3.5 Quidem Digital and the Council's Recycling Campaign

Quidem Digital worked with clients to harness the markets available to their advantage. The company developed its own original content in-house. Their job was to make sure that the right people were getting the message when they needed it.

Good storytelling was of the utmost importance. A story had to be presented in an engaging way with a clear call to action and served on the right platforms to the right people. The story also had to be supported by accurate data.

In present day, a lot of advertising happened online. A pre-roll ad was a promotional video message that played before the content selected. Users were allowed to skip the ad after six seconds of free advertising. The pre-roll ad may have no link to the selected content as it was based on very accurate algorithms (any video source was generally powered by Google, Yahoo or Bing).

People were 10 times more like to stop and engage with video content. It was important to gear campaigns around the local audience as they were more likely to engage.

3.5.1 The Recycling Campaign

The digital campaign aimed to evidence behaviour change in Rugby. It would be delivered through multiple channels and focus on the web animation which would be placed using commercial algorithm.

Quidem Digital developed a short informative animation film featuring three bins. To bring them to life and connect with the audience, each bin had a name, a voice and a character. A competition within local schools to name the bins was under consideration.

The launch of the animation was anticipated for mid-March 2019. It would initially be launched without subtitles. English and Polish subtitles would be added at a later date.

Shorter animations featuring individual bins would be produced in due course.

Measures and desired outcomes of the campaign:

- Quantitative data supporting (or not) link between campaign and behaviour change
- Use of video
- Use of animation to reach various communities
- Output in various formats for use across multiple channels
- Available to education officers for use in schools and community groups
- Future-proofed where possible

Behaviours in need of addressing:

- Plastic bags
- No blame (I do everything right)
- Non-believers (Why should I care)

The principle method for delivery of the campaign was YouTube followed by Facebook and Instagram. The radio campaign would run alongside the digital campaign.

The success of the campaign would be measured via the different urls used:

- Leaflet circulated with Council Tax bills - /whichbin
- Animation - /recycling

The cost of the campaign was covered within an existing budget. As the animation was fully licenced to Rugby Borough Council, no further costs were anticipated.

3.6 Access to evidence

The Task Group review papers are available online at <https://www.rugby.gov.uk/meetings> in the section 'agendas, reports and minutes', and can be found by selecting *Informing and Engaging Our Communities Task Group*.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The task group drew the following conclusions from the evidence that it gathered:

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**Rugby Borough Council
Communications Strategy 2014
For adoption.**

1. The council

Rugby Borough Council is making things better for its residents. By understanding the communities that it serves it provides customer-focused services that meet their needs. The council has ambitious plans for the future growth of the borough, and also to maximise the potential benefits arising from being the birthplace of Rugby football.

2. This strategy

This communications strategy sets out how we will communicate with our residents, businesses, visitors and staff.

In short, our communications will be **direct, digital, devolved, data-led, and deliberate.**

3. Direct communications

Summary

Rugby Borough Council's communications team see the local press, radio and television as only one way of many to reach our communities. Fewer of our residents regularly access traditional media than ever before, and this number is continuing to decline. We must find ways to communicate directly with our communities in ways that are relevant to them. Targeted communications are more effective than traditional approaches, and allow our communities to interact with the council. Direct engagement with relevant messages, not broadcast, is the key to effective and accessible communications.

Actions

We will:

- target our communications directly to the individual, business or community who will most benefit or who are most affected.
- use demographic data to help us to identify who we should engage with, and how to communicate with them using language they understand and in a format they prefer.
- encourage individuals and businesses to interact with the council through their chosen means of communication.

4. Digital communications

Summary

Our communities are becoming “digital-enabled”. Broadband and wifi coverage is nearly universal, and in some communities smartphones are starting to replace fixed telephone lines. Our citizens are able to communicate with and access services 24/7, in the palm of their hand. This is an opportunity that we must embrace, ensuring that the council maximises its presence in the social networks that our citizens use.

Our smartphone app has helped us to serve up content in a format convenient for these users. We must make sure that the right content and right services are accessible on all types of devices and at all times of the day and night to our communities. Digital technologies will help us to do this.

Actions

We will:

- create an infrastructure that allows us to format content, services and information in ways that are useful to our users, regardless of the type of device that they are using.
- adopt web content standards to ensure our web content is relevant, concise, and aimed at helping our website users to complete their chosen task.
- create content in formats and using technologies that allow our communities to reuse it in ways that they find useful.
- engage with our communities in the social networks that they use, helping them to find the information they need, report problems, and achieve their goal.

5. Devolved communications

Summary

Rugby Borough Council trusts its staff and members to represent the best interests of our communities and the council, and will help them to do so whenever it is appropriate. Our combined voices are more powerful, more engaging, and more effective than a single centralised message.

Actions

We will:

- help members and officers to get the skills and knowledge that they need to interact with our communities in the social networks that they use, in a timely, relevant and professional way.
- provide tools and relevant guidelines to help appropriate council departments to promote their services in a timely, relevant and professional way.
- provide the infrastructure to allow members, officers and citizens to report on meetings or events in real-time.

6. Data-led communications

Summary

Good data helps us to get things done. It can show us what needs doing, where, and when. Presented well, it can help our communities to understand the council's decisions. We must make sure that our communications are based on good evidence too. And in those situations where there is no evidence available, we will collect evidence so that it is available to us in future.

Our service areas check their systems, plan changes, implement them and re-check as matter of routine. We must similarly monitor and evaluate our communications.

Actions

We will:

- use data to help us to decide what needs doing, how to do it, and how well we did.
- use good graphic design to help us to present complex data in a way that is easy to understand.
- evaluate our communications by tracking how they have affected desired outcomes.

7. Deliberate communications

Summary

Our communications team has the skills, knowledge and experience to more proactively manage our communications. These communications must focus on key corporate themes, and help our services understand how their messages fit into the bigger picture.

We will be deliberate about this. Sometimes it will be necessary to postpone a communications campaign, or not do it at all, in order to most benefit the council and our communities as a whole. But by planning everything we do in advance, we will be able to take advantage of regional, national or international events more effectively.

Actions

We will:

- use a calendar to help us focus our communications and time their delivery to maximum effect.
- make sure that all of our communications campaigns have a well-defined purpose or "call-to-action" that we can monitor and evaluate.
- make use of regional, national and international news topics and trends to maximise exposure to our communications campaigns.

Rugby Borough Council web content standards.
For adoption

“Golden Rules”

In a sentence:

Is the information you’re presenting to the public necessary, readable, original, easy to find and well-presented?

In a checklist:

1. Is the content answering a question that our customers are asking?
2. Is your content easy-to-read and understandable to a layperson?
3. Is the content original?
4. Can the content be found using search words that make sense to the customer?
5. Are graphics and pictures appropriate and do they add something to the page?

Is the content answering a question that our customers are asking?

Council websites can be cluttered with pages there is no demand for.

This wastes officer time spent writing and maintaining them, and customer time spent wading through them to get to what they need.

Irrelevant content makes relevant information harder to find by making it difficult to navigate to and search for.

Could you justify the publication of your page if you were asked?

Consider...

Who's going to read it?

Pages should relate to questions or queries asked repeatedly by customers.

Your audience should be clear to you as you write.

- Does your page relate to a specific council service?
- Does it meet the needs of the customer, as well as the council?
- Is the potential audience large enough to justify publishing the information?
- Is the potential audience able or likely to access the information via the internet?
- Is there a statutory requirement to publish this information?

Why does your audience need to know?

Information gained from a website should enable, equip or inform a customer to take an action. It's rare to find anyone that will browse council web content for fun.

Think laterally about their reasons for visiting your page, and gear your content toward those reasons.

Is your content easy-to-read and understandable to a layperson?

Web content is often scanned rather than read line-by-line.

Jargon, acronyms and technical terminology can make this difficult, and give the impression that a page is written for experts rather than for everybody.

This leads to a perception that the council is not accessible. It also inevitably leads to people seeking information elsewhere, or through other means.

Poorly written content online often leads to an increase in telephone calls and emails to the council to clear up confusion.

Could you understand your page with no prior knowledge?

Consider...

Is it written in an accessible tone, in plain English, without being over-familiar?

Your page should:

- Be interesting but serve a purpose
- Be approachable but not too chummy
- Feel modern but not try to be 'down with the kids'
- Focus on your council's customers not internal services

Does it get to the point?

Your page should set out its purpose within the first sentence.

Does it avoid jargon?

Is it presented in an interesting and intuitive way?

Information should be in a common-sense order. Don't assume the customer already knows what you're talking about in your introductory sentence.

Big blocks of text are difficult to read. Consider presenting 'sets' of related information in tables or introducing bulleted lists.

Use bold text, but sparingly. Avoid different coloured or differently sized text wherever possible, and never use italics or underlining.

Are headings used appropriately to break content up into identifiable sections?

Headings provide a means for customers to quickly scan a page and identify the content they want to read. However, having too many headings can make a page look cluttered, making it harder to scan, so finding a good balance is key.

Use headings rather than bold text.

Is the content original?

Content writers have to be careful when copying information from other places, especially private sector sources.

Not only are there potential issues with copyright ownership and intellectual property, changes to the information at the source may not be reflected in our web pages.

In addition, sometimes the data is simply not needed – if information already exists, a smarter way to refer to it is by directing customers straight to it.

Care also needs to be taken with images and graphics.

Are you sure that the information or images you're including are owned by your organisation and won't change outside of our control?

Consider...

Are you copying information stored or owned by an external agency, body or company?
If so, you may need to gain direct permission to do so.

Guide customers to external resources rather than reproducing information already available somewhere else.

Is the information advertising a company or private sector service?

The council should not promote or imply promotion of specific businesses or companies.

Are the images, graphics or photographs you're using copyright-free, public domain, or owned or created by your organisation?

Make sure you are using images that don't have a copyright on them – don't save images from search engines for use in council pages.

Can the content be found using search words that make sense to the customer?

Customers may use search words that don't match the exact terms used by your organisation.

The website should be designed for customer use – we need to be aware of the kinds of ways customers will search for our information. It's likely that someone in your organisation will have access to analytics information, telling you about the search terms used.

However interesting and important our content might be to us, the key things to keep in mind as we create a page are how, why and when a customer will want to read or use it.

If we make our content too hard to find, or too complicated for customers to understand, the council will appear out-of-touch, aloof and not working for the people it serves.

What will customers use as search words when they look for your content?

Consider...

Is there a more common way of phrasing something?

For instance, the council might refer to "waste management", but customers will overwhelmingly refer to "rubbish" or "bins".

Does your page title reflect what people will search for?

The title forms the key data used by search engines when indexing and directing customer queries.

'Front-load' titles where possible – put keywords first.

Keep them short and snappy.

Avoid "etc" – be precise – no-one ever searches for "etc".

Have you neglected the "Introduction" or "Summary" sections?

An introduction or summary section provides a short explanation of what the page is about and is used to describe the page for Google and other search engines.

Are the graphics and pictures appropriate, and do they add something to the page?

Images and graphics are useful tools for making a page look interesting, to illustrate points, and for design reasons such as breaking up large amounts of text.

However, you need to be sure that images you do use are of sufficient quality to add something to the page.

You also need to be sure that their use is thought about carefully to make sure customers with accessibility issues aren't disadvantaged if they can't see them.

If we're not careful about our use of images and pictures, pages can look amateurish or vary too much from one service to the next. This doesn't present a professional, consistent, joined-up website to customers.

If the page looks amateurish or poorly laid-out, no matter how good the content is, the information will not be credible or trustworthy to customers.

Do your images add anything to the page?

Consider...

Is the picture strictly necessary?

It might seem desirable to illustrate a page about farming and agriculture with a picture of a tractor, but how does this help the understanding of the customer?

Does the image clash?

Images might clash with the scheme of the site as a whole, or even with other pictures on the same page. Don't, for instance, mix representative clip-art with high resolution photographs.

Is it the right size?

Pictures that are much bigger than the amount of text on the page make the content difficult to read.

Too many pictures also draw the eye away from important information, reduce the visual effect of including them at all, and makes pages crowded and messy.

Less is frequently more.

What stage of the decision-making process are we at?

Below is a table for the different channels and methods you should use depending on how far advanced you are in the process. The idea, of course, is that once you're past the initial stage of just beginning to talk, the rest should follow fairly naturally, as you become more familiar with stakeholders.

Where are you?	Communication	Engagement methods	Information
Just beginning to talk	Exploratory style focused on gauging awareness	Focus groups and research surveys	Introducing initial thoughts
It's out there and people are talking	Setting the agenda and communication of clear direction	Feedback sessions, deliberative events and co-production	Explanatory, making a case for the direction
Plans are receiving feedback and we're working on it	Formal communication that invites feedback	More formal planning and impact sessions	Detailed plans and the impacts, roles and responsibilities
Decisions have been made and we're dealing with the consequences	Directional communication, front-line teams and others delivering messages	Face-to-face with front-line teams and individual correspondence; high level support for transition	Guidance on what happens following decisions

What resources do you have and what limitations apply?

We can all design the perfect engagement process given a blank sheet of paper, but in reality the paper is rarely blank. Restricted budgets and legal requirements about timelines mean that your goal is effective and efficient engagement rather than perfect engagement. To achieve that you need to identify and prioritise the resources at your disposal. These might include:⁴⁰

- input by staff, volunteers and other interested stakeholders
- background information or briefing papers on the issues or plan proposals

⁴⁰ See [The community planning toolkit](#)

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- independent facilitation
- communication and promotion, venue hire, transport, childcare, translation
- printing and circulating a report for provision of feedback
- resourcing local community and voluntary groups to (where necessary) support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals.

You need to have a budget that matches the scale and scope of the process. You will have defined that when you set out your objectives and likely stakeholders. If there is a mismatch, then either ambition or budget must give way. Before dropping anything from your engagement plan, make sure you consider the statutory requirements.

What methods should I choose?

The below, again taken from the [community planning toolkit](#), is a list of the different types of engagement type you might consider. All of these are defined more fully in [the Glossary](#).

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| • art and creativity | • deliberative events | • consensus building |
| • community mapping | • web based consultation | • citizens' panel |
| • planning for real © | • future search | • street stalls |
| • public meetings | • open space technology | • questionnaires |
| • focus groups and workshops | • citizens' juries | • local community meetings |

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Which hat are you wearing?



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