

Appendix 9.c

Communications Strategy

The appendix below contains details of the Communication and Consultation Strategy that has been implemented by Project Transform.

Project Transform

Communications and Consultation Strategy

1 Background

Project Transform is a joint collaboration between **Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council** and **Warwickshire Country Council** to develop effective and sustainable solutions to manage residual waste in the sub-region. Key to this will be the development of a new energy from waste plant.

Project Transform will promote the reduction of reuse of waste – achieving a combined recycling and composting rate of at least 50% by 2020 across the sub-region.

2 Aims of strategy

- To raise the profile of the Project Transform programme and highlight its successes.
- To improve understanding of the way Solihull, Warwickshire & Coventry Councils are working together to develop a realistic and sustainable solution to the challenge of tackling waste.
- To actively engage stakeholders in Project Transform
- To provide a consistent and united response to any criticisms of the project
- To provide members and officers from all three councils with timely, accessible information about the progress of the project throughout its life
- To promote successful joint sub-regional working to tackle major challenges.

3 Objectives of strategy

- To promote the goals of Project Transform to ensure commitment and engagement among stakeholders
- To clearly explain why changes are happening and the role stakeholders can play in influencing change
- To develop mechanisms for ensuring feedback to consultation is built into Project Transform and that stakeholders clearly understand what will happen as a result of taking part in consultation around aspects of Project Transform.
- To make sure that consultation methods are timely and appropriate for specific stakeholder groups
- To provide a framework to support the consistent and timely communications of key messages using the appropriate communications tools that work for each target audience.
- To ensure that all communications are up to date, time, honest and readily available in a format that people want
- To celebrate Project Transform successes and work positively with the media to share these success
- To support key members and officers in all three councils so they are able to play a full part in the process and can support the communications process.

4 Critical success factors

- Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire people are engaged with the programme, understand that everyone will benefit from Project Transform and that the programme is making an important contribution to the issue of tackling landfill and waste problems affecting everyone in the country.
- Residents in the sub-region are engaged, enabling them to support and influence change in a positive way.
- Other key partners are encouraged to work with three councils in all aspects of communication.
- Difficult or sensitive issues are raised in the media in a responsible way, with balance reporting of the issues.

5 Communications challenges

- Managing expectations and ensuring engagement for a major project which will take some years to complete
- Encouraging stakeholders to become champions for the programme
- Ensuring consistency of communications from all three councils, so that key members across Solihull, Warwickshire and Coventry share ownership for the project along with key messages.
- Ensuring the Project Transform brand is used appropriately on all communications tools, along with the logos of all three councils effectively.
- Branding guidelines for Project Transform are developed and used consistently and
- Finding practical examples and case studies to illustrate key messages around the importance of delivering Project Transform
- Making sure that specific issues or challenges do not affect the reputation of the whole programme through adverse media coverage
- Resourcing communications properly throughout the programme through adequate staff support.
- Ensuring local initiatives and campaigns tackling environmental / recycling support where appropriate, key messages agreed for Project Transform.

6 Key communications principles

Research carried out with other councils delivering major PFI programmes (such as Building Schools for the Future) has provided some helpful information which has been used in developing this strategy. Key lessons learned include:

- Most councils identified face to face communication through events as one of the best received sources of communication and one of the best ways of achieving positive outcomes.

- Several councils said that involving stakeholders with up to date information was very important – and not doing this was seen as a key communication risk.
- Many councils also said that dealing with the media and negative communication from communities was a major challenge.

As a result this strategy focuses on ensuring that the most successful communications tools are used as widely as possible (face to face communications), that they are targeted in the right place (with stakeholders) and that information is updated regularly and efficiently (relying on electronic communications to do this wherever possible).

It is also important that at all times communications is open, honest and two way and that all three councils share responsibility for communications and key messages.

7 General key messages

- We are working together to develop a new, state-of-the-art plant that will turn waste from Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull into energy – Project Transform;
- Project Transform will help us achieve a recycling/composting rate of at least 50% by 2020;
- By working together we are confident we can provide a solution to the problem of getting rid of our waste effectively;
- Project Transform is the most cost effective way to deal with the growing challenge of managing our waste;
- The energy from waste plant will not replace the need for us to recycle. We must find ways of recycling more across the region and will be focusing on working with residents on ways of doing this;
- Working together to provide one new plant makes sense in terms of delivering value for money for the taxpayers of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire;

- Coventry is the right place to site a plant – it already has a well established plant in the city that the other councils use already; and
- This is a hugely complex project that will take some years to complete, but we are committed to working with local people and organisations to ensure everyone is fully informed and has the chance to share their views and ideas as the project develops.

Specific key messages will be developed as the project develops – for instance key messages for local people living near the site of the proposed new plan will be needed.

8 Target audiences

- Residents of the Sub-Region;
- Elected Members;
- Environmental pressure and lobbying groups;
- Local communities around site of proposed plant;
- Trade Unions;
- Media;
- Bidders;
- Government (Defra); and
- MPs.

9 Communications tools

Project transform brand to be used on all publicity, promotion material, electronic communications, high level documents, signage etc, used in conjunction with Solihull, Warwickshire and Coventry Council's branding to raise the profile of the campaign and ensure that people understand the Council's key role in delivering the programme.

10 Face to face communications

- Presence at local and community events
- Regular meetings e.g. Project Board, Project Team etc.
- Briefings e.g. cabinets
- Media briefings to correspond with press releases
- Briefing for environmental pressure (lobbying groups)

11 Communication materials

- General display stand materials;
- Project Transform newsletter for key stakeholders to ensure regular updates;
- Direct mailing of detailed information (phone/e-mail/letter);
- Regular articles/features in existing council publications and partner publications; and
- Press releases to local and national print media, radio and television.

12 Electronic communications

- Intranet site – for council employees;
- Internet site;
- Email newsletters and bulletins;
- Hotlines / information lines (for specific project); and
- Dedicated email address to encourage two way communications.

Existing communications tools will be used where possible to ensure value for money and effective distribution, but specific tools will also need to be developed and used.

13 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of communications and consultation will be carried out on an ongoing basis in order to respond quickly to sensitive issues and to ensure messages are being communicated effectively to all key audiences. This will be carried out through monitoring and evaluating of:

- Articles in media – evaluated for positive and negative approaches in stories, usage of key messages, letters to the editor contributions to radio discussions
- Number of visits website
- Use of feedback mechanisms (feedback forms on newsletters, electronic feedback mechanisms etc.)
- Regular surveys of key stakeholders to check effectiveness of communications (questionnaires and face to face).

The use of Project Transform brand will also be monitored to ensure it is being consistently and correctly.

Quarterly monitoring and evaluation communications reports will be presented to Project Board.

Appendix one – list of stakeholders and communications tools

Council stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Communication tool	Outcome
Cabinets	Cabinet reports, briefings regular updates to Cabinet members newsletter	All members of Cabinet understand aims of programme, feel involved and engaged and that their contribution is valued. Cabinet members understand and support specific contribution from their portfolio
Councillors	General – Cabinet reports, newsletters and website, briefings, seminars specific – ward forums, meetings and briefings in local communities on specific issues	All councillors understand aims of project feel involved and engaged and that their contribution is valued. Councillors will understand to specific issues and how they can influence and shape these issues.
Council staff	Cabinet reports, newsletters and website, briefings from managers, internal communications, publications, intranet	Employees understand aims of project and how their service is supporting Project Transform.
Senior Managers in councils	Cabinet report, updates to senior management meetings Briefing, websites, etc.	Senior managers understand importance of project and ensuring corporate responsibility for its success
Trade Unions	Cabinet reports, newsletters and websites, briefings, regular trade unions forum	Unions understand aims of Project feel involved and engaged and that their contribution is valued

Stakeholder	Communication tool	Outcome
	meetings	
Private sector potential partners	Face to face briefings, website, newsletters, reports, brochures, technical information, media coverage	Private sector partners want to be involved in projects.
Chambers of Commerce	As above, plus presentation / update at relevant chamber meetings, article for chamber publications	Local businesses understand aims of project programme and impact it could have on future prosperity of sub-region.
Local media (print and broadcast)	Media releases, newsletters, website, briefings on specific issues, specific information	Media understand the aims of the programme and benefits to future of sub region and report all issues in balanced way
Community groups	As above	Community groups feels involved and able to contribute when needed
Trade press environmental and local government	Media releases, briefings as and when, identification of specific elements that make programme unique or particularly innovative	As above, plus raising of sub regions profile in working effectively together on practical project that will benefit all residents.
National government, regional government	As above	As above
Lobbying/pressure groups	Face to face briefings, regular updates, copies of all public information	Pressure groups feel that – even if they don't agree with principles behind Project Transform – they understand reasons for the project and feel they are being communicated with in open and honest way

