

# Communications Strategy 2024 to 2025



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

## Our Approach

We want to make sure people have a clear understanding of North Ayrshire Council's operations, priorities and challenges and recognise the Council as a reputable and innovative local authority.

We will communicate with those who matter the most - the people, partners and communities we serve, the people we employ and those we do business with. By facilitating conversations and actively encouraging feedback, we will help shape future service transformation and improve service delivery.

All our communications activities are fully aligned to support the delivery of the North Ayrshire Council Plan, ensuring our key audiences and stakeholders have a shared understanding of North Ayrshire Council's vision, values, ambitions and performance.

## Our Standards

The style and standard of our communications reflect the culture of our Council and reveal who we are, what we value and our direction of travel - these are detailed within our Media Protocol. All communications issued by the Council – both internal and external – are:

- **Open and honest** – Plain talking and direct as well as truthful and factual.
- **Timely** – Up-to-date information communicated regularly, consistently, and quickly.
- **Clear and concise** – Easy to understand and jargon free.
- **Accessible** – Easy to access through online and traditional channels.
- **Relevant** – Targeted at the needs of the intended audience.
- **Inclusive** – Designed to encourage and value discussion and feedback, with information available in formats suitable for people with disabilities and in a variety of languages.

## Our Core Principles

We will be driven by the following principles which will frame how we work and prioritise what we do.

- **Digital by default** – placing the strongest emphasis of our work on digital and social media activity. This increases efficiency, reduces costs and is environmentally friendly. Acknowledging the diversity of our population, a range of communications methods are deployed to reach all our audiences, including those with limited or no digital access.
- **Insight-driven** – based on what we know our customers and stakeholders want.
- **Focused on audiences** rather than policies.
- **Fully evaluated** – so that we can tell what is working well and what needs to be improved.
- **Innovative** – continually reviewing and testing our approach to ensure we deliver the right message, at the right time, in the right format.

- **Collaborative** – working with internal and external partners to foster a culture of shared understanding and collective goals.

## **Our Corporate Communications offering**

### **Marketing Campaigns**

Our multi-media and integrated marketing campaigns are recognised for their visual impact, sharp design, clear and compelling messaging, plain language and success rates in meeting our Services' objectives. They reinforce the Council's vision and mission and align with Council Plan priorities. We are committed to ensuring that corporate communications materials are inclusive and available in a variety of formats that meet the needs of the intended audiences.

### **Social Media and Digital Communications**

Our digital channels form the backbone of our communications offering. They are easily the most effective, economical, and efficient means of sharing information and engaging with wide audience groups. Since we began our social media journey in 2009, we have built up a substantial social media audience and now directly engage with some 55,000 users across our corporate X, Facebook, Instagram, You Tube and LinkedIn accounts. We support Services to create their own accounts where there is a clear need and have created a strong family of social media accounts across the Council providing best practice, advice and guidance.

### **Media Relations**

We have sound relations with the media, founded on the principles of fairness and honesty, which allow us to rigorously promote and protect the Council's reputation. We provide a full proactive media service - producing a constant flow of media releases and photocalls for local, regional, national and sectoral/specialist media outlets. And we also offer a full reactive media service - responding to incoming media inquiries, ensuring that they are answered accurately, factually and timeously, reflecting the Council's position. Our on-call media service operates around the clock every day of the year to provide crisis communications support in the event of emergency situations.

### **Internal Communications**

Every member of staff must understand their role as representatives of the Council and how their interactions with our customers help form that person's impression and opinion of the whole organisation, a task ever more important since the introduction of the 'No Wrong Door' approach. Our workforce can only fulfil their responsibilities if they have a clear understanding of the Council's plans and how their work contributes to these priorities.

That's why we place such high importance on getting our internal communications with staff right. We have a suite of channels we use to regularly communicate with staff, which comprise our weekly News in Brief emails, Staff Talk, our quarterly staff magazine and our bespoke Staff News website, accessible for all employees whether in-office or based remotely. We also produce North Ayrshire News for Elected Members to ensure they are equally kept up to date with service information.

## **Insight and Evaluation**

We need to be able to show clear links between the communications activity we undertake and the difference this makes to the lives of North Ayrshire's people and communities. This is why we monitor and evaluate all the work we carry out, sharing this intelligence with Services. This allows us to demonstrate impact and provides insight for continual improvement in the Communications offering we provide.

# Highlights 2023-2024

## Corporate Social Media Platforms



Our corporate social media platforms continue to grow steadily and attract new followers

**Over 8.2 million**

Impressions across all corporate social media channels

**3,618**

New follows



**379,725**

Engagements



## Internal Communications

Staff are kept informed through our Staff News website and via our weekly News in Brief update

**147,105**

Unique page views on Staff News



**56,796**

Unique page views on News in Brief



**6,480**

Unique page views on Staff Talk quarterly online magazine



## Press and Media Enquiries

The Media and Internal Communications Team continue to provide an efficient media service

**358**

Proactive press releases



**351**

Press enquiries



**14**

Filming requests

\*Statistics from April 2023 - February 2024

## Employability Week 2023

**170,331**

Impressions



**102**

Posts



**1677**

Engagements



**1000** people attended events across the week

**500** attended the Jobs Fair, 8 people found work, 34 interviews were arranged and 141 job applications were filled in on the day.

**100** plus, attended the Opening of the Parent Hub, 4 new parents registered for support at the event

**249** Modern Apprentice applications were received after the events

## Promotion of NEC Under 22 Bus Travel

**81,000**

Impressions



**42**

Posts



**1365**

Engagements



**3rd** highest local authority in Scotland for the take up of the NEC scheme

**206** applications were received in one month (Sept) following social media campaign

## MyNAC Account Registration

**59,516**

Impressions



**15**

Posts



**1198**

Engagements



Press Release, Online News and Internal Comms

**2174** new accounts created from Sept - Nov with the support of the campaign

**Our Communications activity has been aligned to support the delivery of the Council Plan and its four priorities. The tables below set out our strategic communications activities for the year and how we aim to position the Council's priorities with our key stakeholders.**

## **Wellbeing**

### **Priority:**

To transition to a wellbeing economy, delivering prosperity, wellbeing, and resilience for local people.

### **Key Communications Activity**

Promotion of refreshed Community Wealth Building strategy which underpins our journey to become a wellbeing economy.

Promotion of the capital investment programme including the educational estate, council house building and infrastructure projects. Highlight Levelling Up Fund investment projects as they move into delivery.

Work to support and promote the emerging plans to re-imagine Irvine's town centre as part of the Long-Term Plan for Towns Levelling Up Funding allocation.

Lead strategic communications across Ayrshire in promoting the Ayrshire Growth Deal. Refine communications plans to ensure alignment with the programme review and continue to promote milestone moments for North Ayrshire's growth deal projects.

Lead strategic communications for the Regional Economic Strategy including support for the delivery of a conference and bespoke website.

Support and deliver place promotion including North Ayrshire's inward investment offering, develop visitor, tourism and summer safety campaigns showcasing the area's attractions and featuring local businesses.

Promote the employability supports in place for businesses and ensure North Ayrshire is recognised as a fair work economy.

Promote the achievements and attainments of our young people and the pathways into sustained positive destinations.

Support the opportunities offered through lifelong learning and skills training pipelines.

Promote our well-maintained places and spaces that are accessible for all with enhanced opportunities for public community transport.

Promotion of cost-of-living supports including the work to tackle child poverty and support the uptake of benefits and financial advice.

Provide communications support for the Health and Social Care Partnership to ensure information is provided to those in most need.

### **What Wellbeing looks like for us**

Pioneers of Community Wealth Building.

Advocates for an inclusive, wellbeing economy which works for people and planet.

The place where businesses are supported to grow and prosper.

Attractive places and spaces for companies, communities, and visitors.

Delivering a £406M capital investment programme which drives forward regeneration of our communities and creates the right conditions for sustainable economic growth and a wellbeing economy.

Championing a lifelong learning approach with clear career pathways and positive destinations where everyone has the opportunity to play their part in building a prosperous North Ayrshire.

Clear signposting routes are promoted to encourage the uptake of entitlements and benefit supports available to alleviate cost-of-living pressures.

Residents most in need of support have clear routes to access health and wellbeing services.





## **Climate Change**

### **Priority:**

To Achieve net-zero by 2030.

### **Key Communications Activity**

Develop and implement a Climate Change Communications Plan focusing on Energy, Nature, Transport, Waste and Adaptations.

Promotion of energy generation projects both municipal and community-owned including Nethermains and Shewalton solar PV farms and supporting the business case for i3 solar and wind power generation, aligned to the wider investment proposition for this strategic investment site.

Support the further development of the Energy Smart programme to provide low carbon advice and physical measures to reduce emissions and improve affordable warmth and assist residents with the cost-of-living crisis.

Support the implementation and delivery of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy in advancing our journey to become net zero.

Communicate the importance that nature and biodiversity play in climate change. Support the introduction of the North Ayrshire Nature Network. Continue to promote the woodland tree planting strategy and community woodland grant fund.

Promote the benefits of our growing active travel network, the expansion of the charging network and progress towards decarbonisation of the Council fleet.

Ensure Community Wealth Building is embedded in all communications so there is a clear line of sight between our economic approach and achieving a just and fair energy transition towards a wellbeing economy.

Promote the flood protection schemes in Millport and the Millburn and support the official opening of Robin Dam, Dalry, as part of the Council's capital investment programme.

Promotion of the journey to become a circular economy where we maximise reuse, recycle, repair and recovery of resources.

Report on climate change policy decisions, milestone moments in project delivery, promote uptake of support schemes to tackle fuel poverty and help with energy efficiency and promote changes to service delivery.

### **What Climate Change looks like for us**

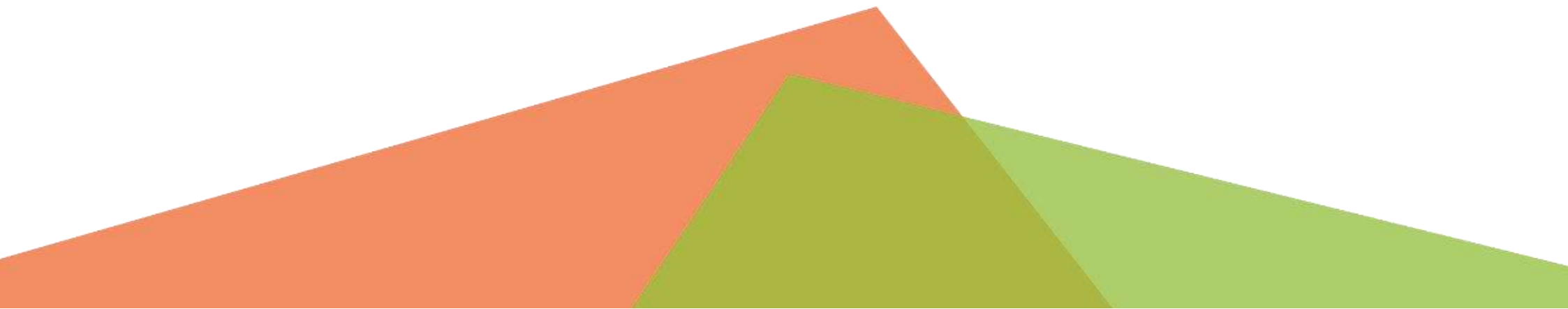
Engaged communities and businesses playing their part in contributing to the Council's journey to become net zero.

Public awareness of the activities and actions the Council is carrying out to reduce its carbon emissions.

Residents informed about how to access help and support to become greener and alleviate fuel poverty.

Encouraging behaviour change for businesses and communities to make active and informed choices about reducing waste, minimising carbon footprints and becoming nature positive.

Showcasing civic leadership in helping to drive down area-wide emissions such as delivering a sustainable construction programme, building green and active transport networks and supporting climate conscious communities.



## **Communities and Local Democracy**

### **Priority:**

We will have active, inclusive, and resilient communities.

### **Key Communications Activity**

Expand and embed the No Wrong Door approach across the Council and Community Planning Partners.

Promote the actions and ambitions of the Participation Strategy.

Support the work of the Safer North Ayrshire Partnership including the Violence Against Women Partnership in reinforcing safety messaging and showcasing the work being carried out to protect our communities in relation to antisocial behaviour, gender-based violence, serious crime, road safety and fire safety.

Continue to raise awareness of the array of work being undertaken by Council services to tackle child poverty and the cost-of-living, revealing the impact this work delivers to communities. Continue the Council's active support of Challenge Poverty Week.

Continue to support the principle and process of Community Asset Transfers and the benefits of locally-based community ownership showcasing achievements and successes.

Provide support to the Community Planning Partnership in relation to:

- the 2024 Community Planning Conference and the second phase of the Democracy Matters consultation,
- the development of a new website incorporating a new events calendar and Community Directory and refreshed mobile app for communities
- refreshed Locality Action Plans.

Further develop and implement the communication plans to promote the work being carried out to support the Arran and Cumbrae Island Plans.

Continue to promote the wide range of arts, cultural and heritage experiences North Ayrshire has to offer residents and visitors.



Further continue our work to deliver hyper-targeted information to North Ayrshire's six localities, using locality networks to ensure our messages and information gets delivered to the heart of communities.

Promote the variety of place-based community funding opportunities including the Community Investment Fund and Participatory Budgeting, to maximise uptake and further empower communities to grasp the opportunity of doing things for themselves and their communities.

Ensuring our communications are inclusive and actively support all residents including our young people, care experienced, new Scots, refugees, elderly, vulnerable and those with protected characteristics.

Continue our commitment to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) working across all services to ensure young people's rights are front and centre of everything we do.

### **What Communities and Local Democracy looks like for us**

Easily accessible and user-friendly public services.

Showcasing best practice and highlighting the inspirational work that empowered local communities are carrying out.

Demonstrating community wealth building in action delivering real results for local communities.

Active and vibrant cultural heritage scene for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Informed communities who are aware of the signposting routes and channels to access local information for funding and other supports.

Ensuring all residents have the opportunity to have their voices heard and can play an active role in contributing and participating in their communities.



## **Sustainable Council**

### **Priority:**

A Community Wealth Building Council that is efficient and accessible, maximising investment and focusing resources towards our priorities.

### **Key Communications Activity**

Promote and encourage people to use their vote and ensure residents are well informed about the election process including the introduction of voter ID and postal voting requirements for UK General elections.

Support a programme of early budget engagement ensuring our approach is inclusive and we secure participation from as wide a demographic as possible.

Support the Council Tax second home premium consultation to inform the 2025 to 2026 Council budget.

Support the development of a refreshed Council website and implement an internal and external communications plan for its relaunch.

Continue to provide a suite of internal communication channels to ensure staff and elected members are well informed and kept up to date about council news.

Promote the income opportunities including uptake of advertising on roundabouts and the council fleet, commercial waste, hall and venue rental.

Ensure that staff, elected members, residents and visitors are kept informed about the introduction of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE) and the pavement parking ban to encourage responsible parking behaviour. Support the refresh of the Town Centre Parking Strategy following DPE introduction.

Promote the range and quality of vacancies the Council has on offer and employee benefits staff can access.

Continue to deliver a public campaign which advocates treating staff with respect and dignity and promotes the commitments sets out UNISON's Violence at Work Charter recognising the importance of staff safety.

Continue the series of staff and community engagement sessions led by the Chief Executive and Council Leader where they can hear about the work the Council is carrying out with and in communities.

Provide daily updates and monitoring of the Council's five corporate social media accounts and continue support, guidance, and best practice updates for the Council's networks of 120 social media accounts.

### **What a Sustainable Council looks like for us**

Delivering positive change and transformation to ensure our services are efficient and targeted towards priority areas.

Clear evidence-based decision making which informs policy and draws on first-hand experiences of residents and communities.

A good employer supportive of the living wage and fair employment practices.

Well-managed and maintained customer communication channels, responsive to customers' needs.

Demonstrating innovation and best value by maximising the value of our assets.



## **Health and Social Care Partnership Communications**

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) – Promotion of work that aligns with our visions, values and principles – our vision being that “All people who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a safe, healthy and active life”

### **Key Communications Activity**

Support Children’s Services to grow pathways of support for Care Experienced Children and Young People - including recruitment campaigns for Fostering, Supported Carers, Short Break Carers and to promote events and interventions designed to support our Care Experienced Community.

Promote refreshed approach to Locality Engagement and attendance at HSCP Locality Conversations.

Consult, engage and launch our new Learning Disability Strategy for North Ayrshire.

Updates on Neurodevelopmental services, pathways and supports for Children and Adults.

Promote digital platforms which support health and wellbeing, alongside decommissioning of the CARENA website to ensure alternative sources of information on supports are both internally and publicly promoted, including the new HSCP Care and Support page.

Promote digital self-management tools including NHS AA application which contains a wealth of information on self-management and the new launch of the Hollyhealth Personalised Behaviour Change App for residents.

Promotion of the Financial Inclusion Service to maximise benefits uptake, Financial Inclusion Partnership to raise profile of supports from a range of agencies, and benefit uptake campaigns.

In partnership with the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, promote the work of the national and local missions to reduce Drug Related Deaths, promote implementation of standards and access to Residential Rehabilitation services.

Recruitment promotion across services in the HSCP, particularly for difficult to fill roles and localities, for example campaign for Arran.

Raise awareness of changes for Community Alarm and Telecare users from the analogue to digital switchover to ensure service disruption is minimised.

Promote supports for Unpaid Carers, to increase reach, support carer identification and provide early and effective supports.

### **Communications Outcomes for NAHSCP**

Promotion of strategies, projects, services and engagement opportunities that will help us to enable our North Ayrshire communities.

Promotion of recruitment, training, policies, strategies, events and opportunities that will help us to develop and support our workforce and promote health and social care as a career path.

Promotion of activities, projects, services and strategies that will help us provide early and effective support to North Ayrshire residents.

Promotion of activities, projects, services and strategies that will help us to improve the mental health and physical health and wellbeing of North Ayrshire residents.

Promotion of strategies, projects, services and engagement opportunities that will enable us to tackle inequalities in North Ayrshire.

