



**Item: 3**

**Policy and Resources Committee: 27 November 2024.**

**Communications and Engagement Strategy.**

**Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.**

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## **1. Overview**

- 1.1. Effective communication is at the heart of every successful organisation. Understanding what the people of Orkney are saying, and having them understand us in return, helps Orkney Islands Council to prioritise the delivery of services and work with our local communities, our teams, and our partners.
- 1.2. Whilst the Council has teams who support communications and engagement, by providing advice, support and guidance, effective communication is everybody's responsibility and everyone in the organisation has a role to play.
- 1.3. The Communication and Engagement Strategy 2024 – 2028 is designed to be a useful tool for Elected Members and officers that sets out a framework for our communication and engagement activities and outlines our strategic priorities; and areas that we want to build on and improve.
- 1.4. Through our communication and engagement activities we aim to:
  - Keep employees and stakeholders well informed: raising awareness of the Council's priorities, activities and local government issues.
  - Consult effectively with stakeholders to inform policy development and decision making.
  - Maintain effective relationships with our communities, employees and the media to help us communicate our message to a wider audience.
  - Coordinate our communications to support the Council in working together towards our shared ambitions and priorities in the Council Plan 2023-2028.

- 1.5. The communications and engagement strategy has identified five strategic priorities to be delivered over its lifetime:
  - i. Making the most of our digital platforms
  - ii. Political engagement and democracy
  - iii. Community consultation and engagement
  - iv. Internal communication and engagement
  - v. Support for services and elected members
- 1.6. Delivery plans will be developed for each strategic priority where these are not already in place. The delivery plans will include further details on the performance measures we will use to measure success and will include baseline data and targets.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
  - i. Approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024 – 2028, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### For Further Information please contact:

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### Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report, and delivery of the strategy must be met from within approved budgets.
2. **Legal:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.
3. **Corporate Governance:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.
4. **Human Resources:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.
5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
  - Growing our economy.
  - Strengthening our Communities.

Developing our Infrastructure.

Transforming our Council.

**8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

Cost of Living.

Sustainable Development.

Local Equality.

**9. Environmental and Climate Risk:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**10. Risk:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**11. Procurement:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**12. Health and Safety:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**13. Property and Assets:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**14. Information Technology:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

**15. Cost of Living:** None directly relating to the recommendations in the report.

### List of Background Papers

None.

### Appendices

Appendix 1: Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-2028.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 3: Island Communities Impact Assessment.



# Communications and engagement strategy



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Why are good communications important?

Effective communication is at the heart of every successful organisation.

Successful engagement with communities, our employees, and other stakeholders begins with making useful information easy to obtain, use and respond to. But communication is more than one-way.

Understanding what the people of Orkney are saying, and having them understand us in return, helps us to guide Orkney Islands Council to prioritise the delivery of services and work with our local communities, our teams, and our partners.

Effective communication ensures that the right messages are received at the right time, by the right people and for the right reason.

## 1.2 What is the purpose of this strategy?

Whilst the Council has teams who support communications and engagement, by providing advice, support and guidance, effective communication is everybody's responsibility and everyone in the organisation has a role to play.

This strategy is designed to be a useful tool for Elected Members and council officers. It sets out a framework for our communication and engagement activities and outlines our strategic priorities; areas that we want to build on and improve.

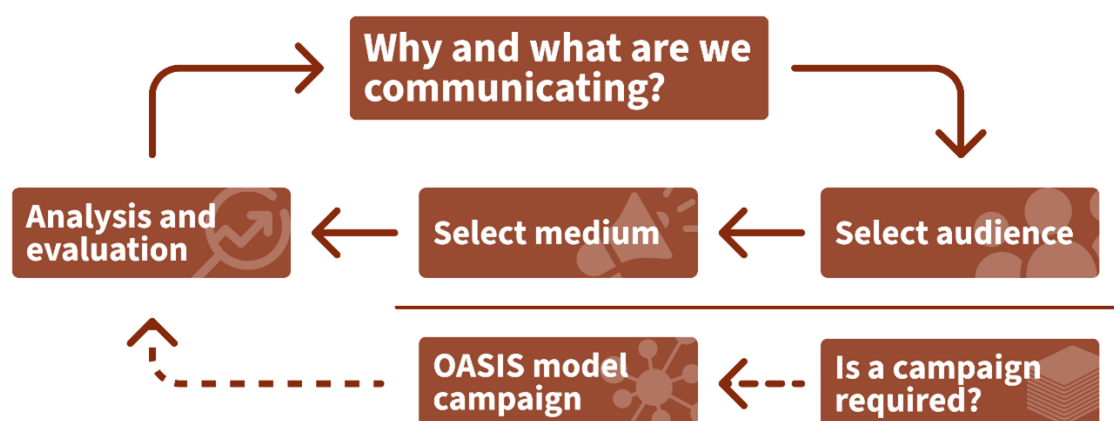


### 1.3 Strategy on a page

The aims of our communication and engagement activities are to:

- Keep employees and stakeholders well informed: raising awareness of the Council's priorities, activities and local government issues.
- Consult effectively with stakeholders to inform policy development and decision making.
- Maintain effective relationships with our communities, employees and the media to help us communicate our message to a wider audience.
- Co-ordinate our communications to support the Council in working together towards our shared ambitions and priorities in the Council Plan 2023-2028.

We have a standard model for our communications activities.



Objectives	Audience Insight	Strategy/Idea	Implementation	Scoring/Evaluation
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Our core activities are:

- Social media and digital engagement.
- National political engagement.
- Local democracy.
- Community consultation and engagement.
- Internal communications and employee engagement.
- Campaigns.
- Publications.
- Media relations.
- Civic events.
- Communications in a crisis.

The communications and engagement strategy identifies five strategic priorities:

- Priority one | Making the most of our digital platforms 2024 => 2026
- Priority two | Political engagement and democracy 2024 => 2025
- Priority three | Community consultation and engagement 2024 => 2026
- Priority four | Internal communication and engagement 2024 => 2026
- Priority five | Support for services and elected members 2024 => 2025

## 2 Strategic context

This strategy does not sit on its own. It supports delivery of the Council Plan 2023-2028, Directorate Delivery Plans, and general service delivery. The diagram below shows how this strategy fits into the wider strategic planning context of Orkney Islands Council.





## 3 Our approach

### 3.1 Our aims

The aims of our communication and engagement activities are to:

- Keep employees and stakeholders well informed: raising awareness of the Council's priorities, activities and local government issues.
- Consult effectively with stakeholders to inform policy development and decision making.
- Maintain effective relationships with our communities, employees and the media to help us communicate our message to a wider audience.
- Co-ordinate our communications to support the Council in working together towards our shared ambitions and priorities in the Council Plan 2023-2028.

### 3.2 Our values

It is important that we consider our communication and engagement activities in the context of our values.



Our key principles for communication and engagement are:

- People** The tone of our communications is warm, welcoming and we use plain, clear, and straightforward language. They tell stories which are about people and places, not plans and policies.
- Unity** We communicate as one Council. We are inclusive in our approach and ensuring that we listen to everyone's voice.
- Trust** Our communications are open, transparent, accessible, accurate and robust.
- Ownership** We are accountable and responsive in our communications.
- Creativity** We embrace different tools and approaches and adjust our methods to meet the needs of our communities and stakeholders.

### 3.3 Our stakeholders

We have many stakeholders both locally and nationally. While there are too many to list here, we consider our stakeholders to include:

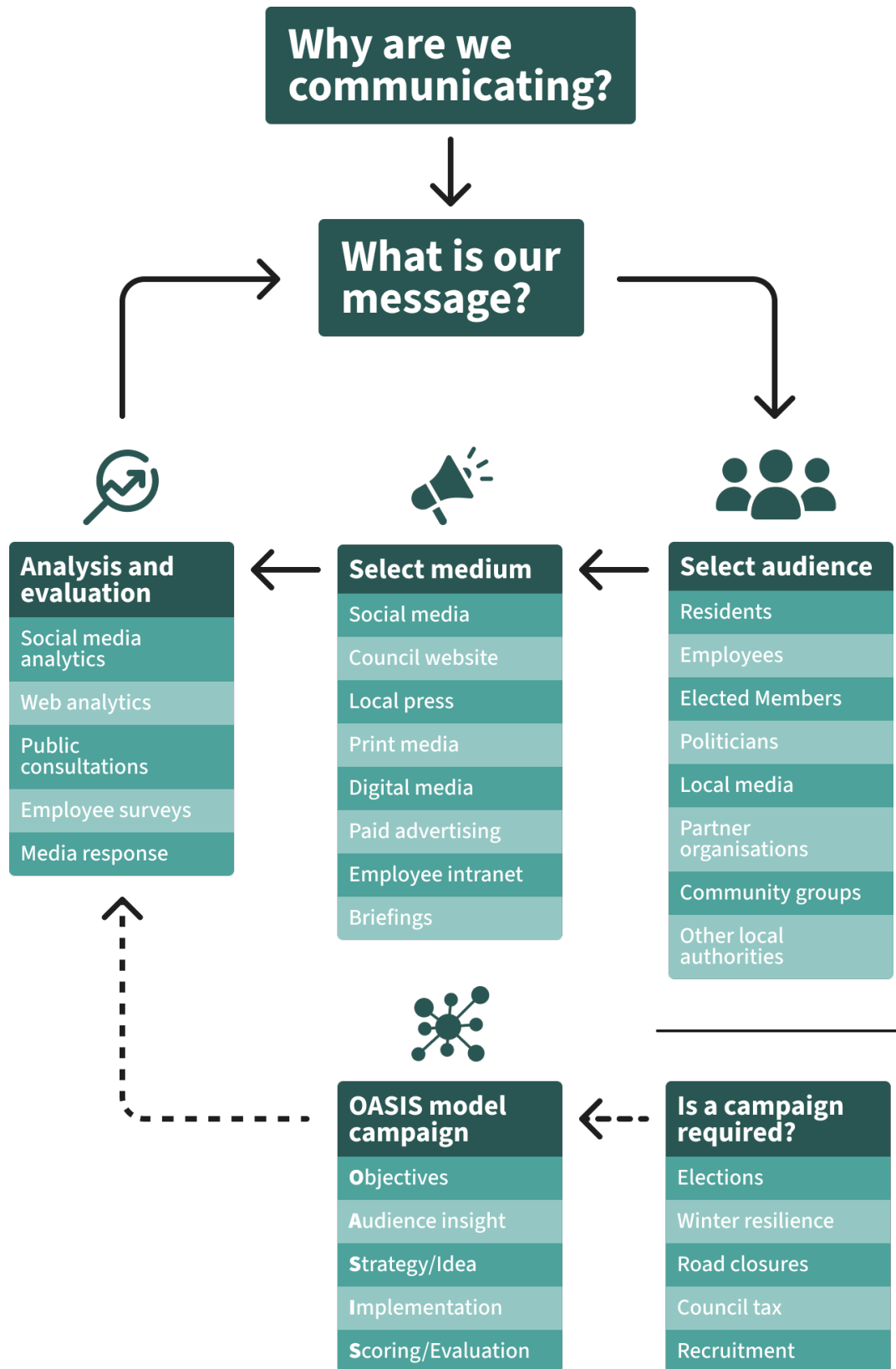
- Our local communities.
- Elected members.
- Our employees.
- People and organisations who use Council services.
- Local businesses and charitable organisations.
- Our community planning partners including:
  - NHS Orkney, Police Scotland, Voluntary Action Orkney, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Orkney Housing Association Limited.
- Community Councils.
- Academic institutions.
- Visitors to Orkney.
- UK and Scottish Governments.
- Local, regional and national media.

### 3.4 What we mean by engage, consult and inform

It is helpful to have a shared understanding of what we mean by engage, consult and inform as we use these terms within this strategy.

<b>Engage</b> working together	Working in partnership with relevant stakeholders and involving them in service development and the decision-making process.
<b>Consult</b> asking for views	Activities that are designed to listen to our stakeholders where we seek to understand the views, experiences, ideas and priorities of our communities. This is used to inform decision-making.
<b>Inform</b> providing information	Providing stakeholders with suitable details about our services, processes, policies, decisions, changes and other information that may affect them.

### 3.5 Our communications model



## 4 Our core activities

The Council provides a range of core communication and engagement activities. This section of the strategy highlights these core activities and identifies strategic priorities for improvement which are detailed further in section 5.

Our core activities are:

- |  |                                |                             |  |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Social media and digital engagement.             | National political engagement. | Local democracy.            | Community consultation and engagement. |
| Internal communications and employee engagement. | Campaigns.                     | Publications.               | Media relations.                       |
|  | Civic events.                  | Communications in a crisis. |  |



## 4.1 Social media and digital engagement



Social media is by its nature about communication and rapid information sharing. Social media is fuelling our service users' expectations around the immediacy of information and their ability to interact directly with the Council.

One of the biggest challenges is knowing which channels the public prefer and to communicate and deliver services to them through that channel of choice.

Beyond just acting to share and access information, social media enables the public to communicate with us, spread information within the community, organise civic action and state their views and needs. It allows us to increase transparency in how we interact with them.

The Council operates two media platforms: Facebook and X (Twitter), both of which have a high number of users. Orkney Islands Council has the highest number of both Facebook and X followers per head of population of all 32 Scotland's local authorities. The Orkney Library and Archive Facebook page is particularly well known and has a worldwide following.



In addition to social media a significant number of people living in Orkney will access the Council's website on a regular basis to find out more about Council services, pay bills or read the latest Council news. The Council website is an important tool in communicating and engaging with the public.

As we continue to develop our website the aim is to have greater functionality, for it to be easier to navigate, with more up to date relevant information and to investigate new tools like live chat.



Video content is everywhere in our lives. Social media videos create far more engagement than any other type of media content, meaning they are also more likely to be seen by more people than a non-video post. Video creates the opportunity to present an organisation in a more human way. Alongside photos and traditional text, videos let the audience see the faces and hear the voice of organisational leaders, as if they were in the room talking with them, explaining why key decisions have been made.

Development of digital platforms is an important priority within this strategy.

**Strategic priority one | making the most of our digital platforms | section 5.1.**

## 4.2 National political engagement



With local authority finances under immense strain due to the cost-of-living crisis and other factors, it is more important than ever to be able to successfully lobby the Scottish and UK Governments and work with national bodies like the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to ensure that vital projects can be achieved.

Lobbying efforts are undertaken by the Council's political leadership directly with Ministers, while some lobbying campaigns can be planned internally or outsourced to external companies.

Political engagement takes a co-ordinated approach, supporting the priorities of the Council Plan, and bringing in the voices of communities in Orkney to underline our message and the benefits success would bring to our people. This is underpinned by our political engagement strategy, which will be kept up to date, so it remains effective in a changing political landscape.

**Strategic priority two | political engagement and democracy | section 5.2.**

## 4.3 Local democracy



Strong local democracy is a critical part of decision-making in Orkney. Orkney has an engaged group of 21 Councillors who speak for the communities they represent across the six electoral wards, including around 19 inhabited islands depending on the time of year.

It is important that the public are kept up to date with the work of the Council, ensuring they understand how the Council works. Transparency is vital and the public should be able to understand how and why decisions have been made and what these decisions mean for people's lives. Audio-casting of Council meetings is one method we use to provide transparency of our decision-making process.

There are 20 active Community Councils, representing local views which can influence decisions in planning and the provision of local services. Despite the importance of the work of Community Councils, there are still many people in Orkney who do not know what a Community Council is and the benefits of being engaged with them. It is a priority of this strategy to communicate to the public what Community Councils are, why they are important and what the benefits are of becoming involved in one.

**Strategic priority two | political engagement and democracy | section 5.2.**

## 4.4 Community consultation and engagement



Consulting and engaging with our communities is at the heart of this strategy. Ensuring that people are involved and informed in the work of the Council is essential in planning, prioritising and improving Council services and to improving our reputation.

We have adopted guidelines and good practice developed by The Orkney Partnership. These are available [here](#).

We need to consider more modern methods of consultation. Whilst face to face consultation has many benefits and is considered the best method of engagement in many cases, our rural and dispersed nature requires us to consider digital platforms too.

We need to improve the way we provide final feedback on the outcome of our consultation and engagement exercises. Taking a “We asked ... you said ... we did” approach will provide clear messages about the Council’s consultation process and how local people’s views will be taken and used to inform decision-making. This helps to manage expectations of local people where there is support for a particular course of action that will not be taken forward.

Each part of Orkney, particularly its individual islands, has their own identity and needs, and best methods of communication and engagement. We must pay attention to Orkney’s communities taking into account protected characteristics, and those people who are typically lesser heard, and ensure these groups are not overlooked in our engagement. We must recognise one approach may not be best suited to reaching everyone.

Further development of our consultation and engagement approaches is a strategic priority within this strategy.

**Strategic priority three | community consultation and engagement | section 5.3.**

## 4.5 Internal communications and employee engagement



Our employees are our most valuable asset. It is through our people that we deliver services and relationships with our communities. We are all ambassadors for the Council, helping our communities to understand what the Council does, why it does it and to carry messages back to help shape services in the future.

There is a direct link between levels of employee satisfaction and advocacy. The more satisfied our teams are, the more likely they are to be an ambassador for the Council. Good communication and engagement is an important part of achieving this.

Communicating and engaging with employees is a lot more than informing them of the latest Council initiative or corporate policy, it’s about genuinely engaging with the people in our organisation, so they feel and know that their voice makes a difference, and their opinions and suggestions are valued. Our leaders, at all levels, have a critical role in achieving this.

The Council achieved Investors in People in January 2023 and will continue to build on that success. Our Values in Practice employee recognition scheme helps us to recognise and celebrate the contribution individuals and teams make and helps employees to ‘live’ our values. We continue to listen to our teams including through employee surveys and engagement events.

We want to demonstrate a clear, strategic approach to delivering effective internal communications and engagement, with a view to ensuring that all employees understand the priorities of the Council and that they feel valued and able to contribute to major changes affecting the services that they provide.

Delivering improved internal communication and engagement is a key strategic priority in this strategy.

**Strategic priority four | internal communications and engagement | section 5.4.**

## 4.6 Campaigns



Campaigns are a planned series of communications activities on a specific issue or theme across channels. These campaigns aim to help local people learn more about, or actively take part in, services and events across the Council, such as the opening of a new facility or to encourage people to take part in a survey. Campaigns can also lead to behaviour change, for example an increase in household recycling.

It is important that a planned approach is taken. The UK Government’s campaign planning framework is a core tool for this and further details can be found [here](#). Improving the use of this model and our campaign planning approach is a priority for development within this strategy.

**Strategic priority five | support for services | section 5.5.**

## 4.7 Publications



The Council creates many publications throughout the year to inform the public and stakeholders on key issues, events and deadlines. These can be online documents, printed physical copies, or both. These include items such as strategies, plans, annual reports and leaflets.

Our aim is that our communities find the information contained within our publications interesting and engaging, up to date and relevant to them, helps them to access services and informs them of the work of the Council.

**Strategic priority five | support for services | section 5.5.**



## 4.8 Media relations



Over the last 10 years the news landscape has changed dramatically. With the increase in digital communications and ‘citizen journalism’ much more emphasis is placed now on the speed of responses. Expectation has also increased that organisations should provide more than just press releases; with the drive towards ‘digital first’ it is expected that organisations should be providing much more imagery, video and other interesting online content.

Our local media are very active and an intrinsic part of our community. Their scrutiny of the Council is a valuable tool in communicating with our communities. An effective and trusting relationship between the Council and the local media can allow both these aspects to exist alongside each other.

All interactions with the media, both proactive and reactive, are co-ordinated through the Communications Team.

We aim to strengthen relationships with the media through improved processes around the identification of good news stories, the availability of engaging digital content and better understanding of the media and their requirements across the Council.

## 4.9 Civic events



The Council organises and participates in civic events throughout the year as part of maintaining our local heritage and culture. From regular fixtures like the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony and Norwegian Constitution Day, as part of our twinning arrangements with Vestland county in Norway, to ministerial or ambassador visits. Our twinning arrangements support our important Nordic cultural links.

## 4.10 Communications in a crisis



As part of its duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Council has a responsibility to communicate with the public prior to, in the event of, and during the recovery from, an emergency.

The Council has shown its commitment to good communications in a crisis in recent times, for example during adverse weather events or the Covid pandemic. During these events the Council demonstrated its ability to provide the public with advice, support and reassurance.

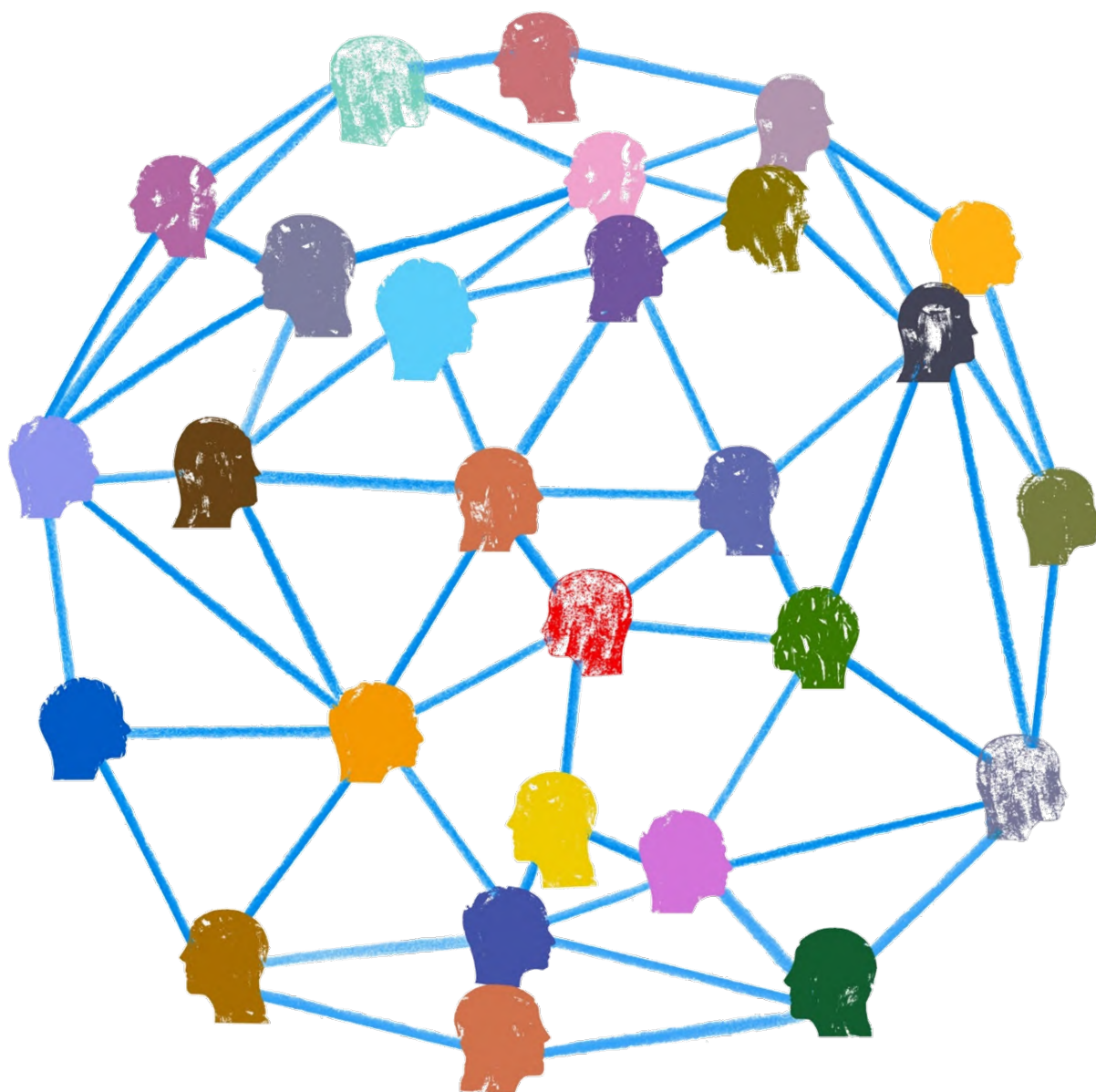
The Council is not complacent in its duty and we are always looking to reflect upon and improve our approach to communicating in a crisis.

## 5 Strategic priorities

This strategy identifies the priorities that will be delivered over its term. This section outlines these priorities and some of the high-level actions that will be taken. Delivery plans will be developed for each strategic priority where these are not already in place. The delivery plans will include further details on the performance measures we will use to measure success and will include baseline data and targets.

Several priorities have been outlined in the [Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions Directorate Delivery Plan](#).

- SPBS 10 | community consultation and engagement [page 15].
- SPBS 11 | external communication [page 15].
- SPBS 12 | internal communications [page 16].
- SPBS 13 | Council publication scheme [page 16].



## 5.1 Making the most of our digital platforms

### Strategic priority one | desired outcome



Our digital platforms are suitable and used effectively to support the priorities of the Council. They provide clear, engaging and accessible information which the public trust, respect and have confidence in.

### What we want to achieve

Supporting outcomes	What does success look like
Our website will have improved usability and structure with easy to find information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased website usage.</li> <li>Improved feedback on usability.</li> </ul>
We have a co-ordinated and effective approach to the use of social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased social media audience.</li> <li>Increased social media engagement.</li> <li>Clearly defined channel usage.</li> </ul>
We have more engagement with our platforms and the media through the increased use of video.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased website usage.</li> <li>Increased social media engagement.</li> </ul>
Our publications are up to date, are well structured on the Council website and meet accessibility and inclusive communication standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Council publications are easy to find.</li> <li>Publications reach a wider audience.</li> </ul>

### How will we do this

- Review and improve the structure, usability and accessibility of the Council website.
- Review the use of social media channels and identify and deliver areas of improvement including the creation of a social media protocol.
- Increase the use of videos in social media and press releases.
- Improve the structure for publications on the Council website and establish a protocol for the uploading of finalised publications to the relevant section.

### Measuring success

We will measure:

- The levels of usage and engagement for our digital platforms.
- The public's satisfaction with our digital communications.

### Who will do this and by when

This priority is owned by the Service Manager (Democratic Services and Communications) and will be delivered by the Communications team.

Timescale: staged delivery 2024 => 2026.

## 5.2 Political engagement and democracy

### Strategic priority two | desired outcome



People in Orkney understand local democracy and hear the voices of those involved in it, both Elected Members and Community Councils. Our voice influences national government through effective lobbying.

### What we want to achieve

Supporting outcomes	What does success look like
The public hear the voice of Elected Members as the Council's decision makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Elected Members are visible in the media as the Council's decision makers, including for budget setting.</li> </ul>
We have focused and co-ordinated lobbying with clear messaging on the issues affecting Orkney.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orkney influences decision-making by national government.</li> <li>Orkney continues to influence national policy development.</li> </ul>
Communities in Orkney support our Community Councils and understand their vital role in local democracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The public understand the role of Community Councils and what is delivered for their communities.</li> <li>More interest in Community Council involvement as Members or Clerks.</li> </ul>

### How will we do this

Support the Convener, Leader, Depute Leader and Committee and Board Chairs to speak with the media as the Council's decision makers.

Update and effectively implement our political engagement strategy.

Develop a communications campaign to promote the work of Community Councils.

### Measuring success

We will measure:

- Level of Elected Member engagement with the media.
- Number of people standing for Community Councils and number of Clerk applications.

### Who will do this and by when

Work streams in this priority will be owned by:

- Voice of Elected Members | Service Manager (Democratic Services and Communications)
- Political engagement | Service Manager (Strategy and Partnership)
- Community Councils | Service Manager (Democratic Services and Communications)

Timescale: staged delivery 2024 => 2025.

## 5.3 Community consultation and engagement

### Strategic priority three | intended outcome



Our community consultation and engagement practices are effective and clearly influence decisions and improvement.

#### What we want to achieve

Supporting outcomes	What does success look like
Improved capacity, updated channels and better co-ordination within the Council, and The Orkney Partnership for community consultation and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More options for Council service teams to consult and engage with the public.</li> <li>• A better experience for stakeholders.</li> <li>• Improved public engagement.</li> </ul>
It is clear that input from the Orkney public feeds into Council decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better-informed decision-making because of increased public input.</li> </ul>
A sustainable model for community consultation and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established support for ongoing delivery of consultation and engagement.</li> </ul>

#### How will we do this

Develop a modernised suite of tools and protocols.

##### Stage one

- Online community engagement platform.
- Orkney Matters.
- Engagement with young people.
- Typically lesser heard voices.

##### Stage two

- Orkney opinions.
- Participatory Budgeting / Democracy.
- Joint Strategy for community consultation and engagement with the public.

#### Measuring success

We will measure:

- The public's awareness and trust in the process.
- Participation from under-represented groups.

#### Who will do this and by when

This priority is owned by the Head of Improvement and Performance and led by the Service Manager (Strategy and Partnership).

Timescale: staged delivery 2024 => 2026.

## 5.4 Internal communication and engagement

### Strategic priority four | desired outcome



Employees and elected members are informed and engaged by high quality internal communication and engagement which they trust, respect and have confidence in.

### What we want to achieve

Supporting outcomes	What does success look like
We have a co-ordinated and effective approach to internal communications and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our employees and elected members feel informed and listened to.</li> <li>• Regular updates across the Council.</li> <li>• Clearly defined communications and engagement channels and protocols.</li> </ul>
Leaders at all levels across the Council communicate and engage with their teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers are clear on their role in communicating and engaging with their teams.</li> </ul>
Our employees can find information, internal resources, and news when they need them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal resources, including templates, are easy find.</li> <li>• Publications reach a wider audience.</li> </ul>

### How will we do this

- Clearly define our internal communications and engagement channels.
- Develop a protocol, related processes and clear guidance for leaders and managers which includes appropriate governance.
- Using the protocols to embed regular communications and engagement activities.
- Development of our resources, template, staff hub and intranet.
- Improve the use of Elected Member briefings and seminars.

### Measuring success

We will measure:

- Employee satisfaction generally and satisfaction with our internal communications and engagement activities.

### Who will do this and by when

This priority is owned by the Head of Improvement and Performance and will be delivered by a multi-service working group. The working group will include representatives from:

- Democratic Services and Communications.
- Organisational Development.
- Customer Services and Corporate Administration.

Timescale: staged delivery 2024 => 2026.

## 5.5 Support for services and elected members

### Strategic priority five | desired outcome



Council services and elected members are supported with their external communications and engagement activities, clearly understand our processes, and have access to the resources when they are needed.

### What we want to achieve

Supporting outcomes	What does success look like
Communications are co-ordinated providing the public, and other stakeholders, with clear messaging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear approach for proactive and reactive communications.</li> <li>• Clear messaging for stakeholders.</li> </ul>
Communication campaigns are planned and structured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate use of our campaign planning approach.</li> <li>• A schedule of campaigns available across the organisation.</li> </ul>
Publications and communications content have a consistent style and branding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding of corporate branding across the Council.</li> <li>• Consistent and appropriate use of the Council logo by partner organisations.</li> </ul>
Council services have access to an image library which supports the production of publications and communications content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a self-service library of approved images available to Council services.</li> </ul>

### How will we do this

- Develop a communications protocol.
- Develop and provide communications training for officers and elected members.
- Embed our campaign approach and develop a corporate campaign schedule which is available across the business.
- Refresh and embed our corporate branding guide and templates.
- Create an image library which are rights free and have the required consents.

### Measuring success

We will measure:

- Service satisfaction in the support available.
- The public's satisfaction with our communications activities.

### Who will do this and by when

This priority is owned by the Service Manager (Democratic Services and Communications) and delivered by the Communications team.

Timescale: staged delivery 2024 => 2025.

## 6 Version control

Version	Status	Date	Amended by	Reason / overview
0.0.A	Draft	19 April 2024	AJR	First draft for initial review.
0.0.B	Draft	02 May 2024	AJR	Second draft for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions review and input.
0.0.C	Draft	01 October 2024	AJR	Third draft for Extended Corporate Leadership Team review and input.
0.0.D	Draft	23 October 2024	AJR	Fourth draft for Communications and Engagement Consultative Group and Corporate Leadership Team review and input.
0.0.E	Draft	14 November 2024	AJR	Draft for presentation at Policy and Resources Committee.





## Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

<b>1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan</b>	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-2028
Service / service area responsible.	Democratic Services and Communications
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Ross Cunningham, ross.cunningham@orkney.gov.uk
Date of assessment.	29 October 2024
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	New strategy replacing previous version.

<b>2. Initial Screening</b>	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	<p>The strategy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep employees and stakeholders well informed: raising awareness of the Council's priorities, activities and local government issues.</li> <li>• To consult effectively with stakeholders to inform policy development and decision making.</li> <li>• Maintain effective relationships with our communities, employees and the media to help us communicate our message to a wider audience.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate our communications to support the Council in working together towards our shared ambitions and priorities in the Council Plan 2023-2028.</li> </ul>
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	This strategy is of strategic importance.
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	<p>We have many stakeholders both locally and nationally who will be affected by this strategy. While there are too many to list them all individually, we consider our stakeholders to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our local communities.</li> <li>• Elected members.</li> <li>• Our employees.</li> <li>• People and organisations who use Council services.</li> <li>• Local businesses and charitable organisations.</li> <li>• Our community planning partners including:</li> <li>• NHS Orkney, Police Scotland, Voluntary Action Orkney, Scottish Fire and Rescue and Orkney Housing Association.</li> <li>• Community Councils.</li> <li>• Academic institutions.</li> <li>• Visitors to Orkney.</li> <li>• UK and Scottish Government.</li> <li>• Local, regional, and national media.</li> </ul>
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	<p>This strategy aligns with the Council Plan 2023-2028. A public engagement exercise called Orkney Matters helped form the Council Plan and has fed into this Strategy. It highlighted that “Communication and the approaches used for consultation” is a priority for people living in Orkney. This led to a strategic outcome that “Engagement with communities is effective and clearly influences decisions and drives improvement”. A further outcome has been set out (pg.17) which aims to ensure “our services are designed to be available online, efficient and automated, giving customer choice and control”. As with the Council Plan, this strategy is expected to improve outcomes for people of all age groups.</p> <p>In additional feedback through Facebook comments, and through stakeholder groups (e.g. Community Councils) has fed into this Strategy. The Strategy has included input from Council Officers and Elected Members. This has taken the form of individual input and from staff surveys and focus groups.</p>

<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise.</p> <p>E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>As noted in the previous answer Feedback has been sought and received. Equalities issues have been considered from this feedback. This includes locational equalities (e.g. those on the ferry linked isles) as well as using different channels so that those that are not digitally active can access information. Around consultation and engagement there is a specific focus on accessibility for typically lesser heard voices.</p> <p>Other specifics are noted below for the different equality areas.</p>
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise.</p> <p>E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See <a href="#">The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies</a> for further information.</p>	<p>According to the Scottish Government, in March 2020, only 51% of households earning less than £10,000 had home internet access, compared with 99% of households with income over £40,000. Even when poorer households had access to equipment and internet, they were less than likely to have the skills to use it.</p> <p>As noted in the last answer this is considered as part of the Strategy ensuring we have other options beyond solely digital channels.</p>
<p>Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?</p>	<p>(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons).</p>
<p>1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.</p>	<p>We know that minority ethnic people are often underrepresented in engagement activities, due to cultural and language differences, which can lead to barriers in accessing important information.</p> <p>With these in mind, the Strategy outlines a clear outcome to ensure there is “improved usability” of the website and that information is “easy to find”, and that publications “meet accessibility and inclusive communications standards”.</p> <p>This will be attained by reviewing and improving the structure, usability and accessibility of the council website.</p> <p>In the Community Consultation and Engagement section (pg.18) of the Strategy, a specific success measurement is stated as “We will measure participation from under-represented groups”, which will include consideration of audiences based on race.</p>

	<p>When it comes to internal communications with OIC staff, we will also measure employee satisfaction with internal comms and engagement activities.</p>
<p>2. Sex: a man or a woman.</p>	<p>We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of their sex.</p> <p>According to the National Records of Scotland, in 2022, 50.9% of the Orkney population were women and 49.1% were men.</p>
<p>3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p>	<p>We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of their sexual orientation. We remain committed to providing safe spaces for people to share their views with us.</p>
<p>4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.</p>	<p>The Strategy is not expected to present any risk to people who have reassigned their gender. We remain committed to providing safe spaces for people to share their views with us.</p>
<p>5. Pregnancy and maternity.</p>	<p>We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of their pregnancy and maternity.</p>
<p>6. Age: people of different ages.</p>	<p>Older people generally prefer print and face-to-face communications rather than social media and using online services. However, older people and people of all ages will regularly use the council website and so, as outlined in the Race section, the Strategy outlines a clear outcome to ensure there is “improved usability” of the website and that information is “easy to find”, and that publications “meet accessibility and inclusive communications standards”.</p> <p>The Strategy recognises that not everyone can or wishes to receive information digitally. Levels of engagement with digital services generally tends to decrease as age rises, with the over 70s particularly less likely to engage digitally.</p> <p>As stated with the Community consultation and engagement section (pg 18), we will continually measure the public’s awareness and trust in the process [of consultation and engagement]. The effectiveness of such engagements with older people will be paramount when this will be measured.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council Plan, which this Strategy</p>

	<p>aligns with, made the observation [pg 11] that “...our plan includes... taking advantage of new online channels if people prefer to use them, but not forgetting the need or traditional methods. Sometimes, there is no substitute for a proper talk, in person, over a cup of tea.”</p> <p>Orkney has a higher average age than either Scotland as a whole or the UK as a whole.</p> <p>Conversely engagement with young people has traditionally been seen as difficult to achieve. With the move to embrace more digital technology, creative digital methods of engagement may offer opportunities for increased participation. Indeed, “Engagement with young people” is a specific priority outlined on pg 18.</p> <p>According to the Scottish Household Survey 2021, 100% of young people aged 16-24 use the internet. This data highlights the effectiveness of digital services and social media to communicate with this age group, and the outcomes within this Strategy will seek to improve that communication to this age group.</p>
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of their religion or beliefs or none however we are sensitive to religions and beliefs that may impact people’s opportunity to attend events or receive information.
8. Caring responsibilities.	This Strategy and any planned events will ensure it considers the needs of carers when participating in engagement activities and the challenges that may exist due to their individual caring responsibilities. This includes the holding of events both in-person and online to ensure maximum participation.
9. Care experienced.	We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of being care experienced. We remain committed to providing safe spaces for people to share their views with us.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	We do not expect that this Strategy will affect people on the grounds of their marriage or civil partnership status. We remain committed to providing safe spaces for people to share their views with us.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health)

<p>or not).</p>	<p>According to the Scottish Household Survey, those with a disability (long-term limiting physical or mental health illness) are less likely to use the internet compared to non-disabled people and this increases with age.</p> <p>This demonstrates the importance of holding both in-person and online events for as many people to participate as possible. In person engagement event venues will also need to be accessible to members of the public and staff with disability or disabilities.</p> <p>The Council also takes seriously its responsibilities to ensure that its information and communications are as accessible as possible.</p> <p>As stated in previous sections, this Strategy is committed to “improved usability” of the website and that information is “easy to find”, and that publications “meet accessibility and inclusive communications standards”. So these measures should improve the experience of people living with a disability.</p> <p>We continue to build on existing links with the third sector and community groups supporting those with disabilities to ensure their voices are heard and they are given the chance to be meaningfully involved in engagement activities.</p>
<p>12. Socio-economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>People who are socio-economically disadvantaged are typically less likely to take part in engagement events or utilise the council’s online services due to digital exclusion.</p> <p>According to the Scottish Government, in March 2020, only 51% of households earning less than £10,000 had home internet access, compared with 99% of households with income over £40,000. Even when poorer households had access to equipment and internet, they were less than likely to have the skills to use it.</p> <p>This creates a significant barrier in reaching people affected by digital exclusion. To address this the Strategy commits to holding both in-</p>

	person and online events to attain maximum participation and to engage with “Typically lesser heard voices” when the community is being consulted.
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### 3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No. The next stages – which will involve working groups being set up to undertake the delivery of the strategic priorities – will provide more detail in how best to achieve the priorities whilst improving the experience for stakeholders.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	By continuing to work with stakeholders and partners.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

### 4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No further equalities work is required on the Strategy itself
What action is to be taken?	Following the agreement of the Strategy by Elected Members, the Head of Service for Improvement and Performance will lead the organisation of working groups to take forward the agree strategic outcomes.
Who will undertake it?	Head of Service for Improvement and Performance
When will it be done?	Late 2024/Early 2025
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	The measurement of success will be monitored by the Head of Service, Service Manager and Team Manager responsible for Communications. Their success will be scrutinised by Elected Members and officers who are members of the Communications Working Group, which will meet on a quarterly basis.

Signature:

Date:

Name:

(BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at [hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk)



## Island Communities Impact Assessment

### [OIC Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-28]

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	The Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-28 is designed to be a useful tool for elected members and council officers in setting out a framework for Orkney Islands Council's communications and engagement activities. It also sets out the OIC's strategic priorities in this area and what they want to improve on.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	Response
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	<p>The aims of the strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep employees and stakeholders well informed.</li> <li>• To consult effectively with stakeholders.</li> <li>• To maintain effective relationships with the media.</li> <li>• Coordinate the council's communications.</li> </ul>
Do you need to consult?	Stakeholder input has formed part of the development of this strategy as outlined in the Equalities Impact Assessment. A separate consultation with the public has not been required.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	Islands can be identified as the collective Orkney Islands (of around 20 inhabited islands), as a group (i.e. North Isles, South Isles, Ferry-linked isles), or individually (i.e. Mainland Orkney, Eday, etc). Islands will be considered as per the Scottish Islands Act (2018) as a “formed area of land surrounded on all sides by the sea (ignoring artificial structures such as bridges) and above water at high tide”.
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	The intended outcomes of the Strategy are to improve the council's communications and engagement activities. The strategic improvement outcomes are as follows:

	<p>(1) Making the most of our digital outcomes  (2) Improve political engagement and democracy  (3) Improve community consultation and engagement  (4) Improve communication and engagement  (5) Provide support for services and elected members</p> <p>The strategy ensures that communications and engagement activities will achieve these outcomes in a way that will not disadvantage those on our ferry-linked isles. As an example engagement events take place on the ferry-linked isles allowing those living on the isles to participate in the process.</p>
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	This is a new strategy, which is a successor to similar strategies in previous years.
Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Response
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	<p>There are around 22,500 people living in the Orkney Islands with around 17,000 in Mainland Orkney, 900 in South Ronaldsay, 400 in Burray, and 2,700 spread across the remaining islands.</p> <p>There are approximately 20 inhabited islands in Orkney, 2 of which are linked to Mainland Orkney by causeways and the remainder are linked to Mainland Orkney by ferry or plane.</p> <p>Across the population, 50.9% are female and 49.1% are male. The 45 to 64 age group is the largest of Orkney’s age groups with a population of 6,588 in 2022. The 16-24 age group is the smallest with 1,658.</p>
Do you need to consult?	No.

<p>How does any existing data differ between islands?</p>	<p>In terms of the population, islands across Orkney can vary in size, with Mainland Orkney home to around 75% of Orkney's residents. Westray and South Ronaldsay are the only other islands with more than 500 residents.</p> <p>There are differences in household poverty levels across Orkney. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation outlined that the group of islands of North Ronaldsay, Sanday and Stronsay and the group of islands of Hoy and Flotta have higher levels of deprivation than other Mainland wards or groups of islands in Orkney. Households with less income are more likely to be affected by digital exclusion.</p> <p>There are also differences in connectivity (both in transport and digital) between islands which can affect how easy it is for example for individual islands to access the internet or how easy it is for OIC staff members to visit an island due to transport considerations.</p>
<p>Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?</p>	<p>Multiple approaches are used as part of consultation and engagement which ensure those living on one of the ferry linked isles are not disadvantaged.</p>
<p>Step 3 – Consultation</p>	<p>Response</p>
<p>Who do you need to consult with?</p>	<p>Elected members and council officers will be consulted with. There is no public consultation however public feedback from multiple stakeholder (Orkney Matters, Facebook comments, input from groups like Community Councils) as fed into, and formed this strategy.</p>
<p>How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?</p>	<p>Through internal working group meetings and publicly to be discussed and approved by Elected Members in Policy &amp; Resources Committee. There is no public consultation.</p>

What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	n/a. There is no public consultation.
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	In 2020-21, Orkney Islands Council and partners ran a public engagement exercise called Orkney Matters with 730 responses. A priority from this engagement was for “communication and the approaches used for consultation”. This Strategy aims to improve that communication and consultation.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	n/a. There is no public consultation.
<b>Step 4 – Assessment</b>	<b>Response</b>
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	There is no unique impact on island communities.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	While there are potential barriers to engagement due to connectivity issues on the ferry linked isles, these are already addressed as part of our established practice.
How will you address these?	Barriers are addressed by the strategy and further details will be included within the supporting delivery plans. For example, for Orkney Matters 2 engagement events took place on ferry linked isles so there was no disadvantaged for isles residents.
<p><b>You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).</b></p> <p>If your answer is <b>No</b> to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and <b>you can process to Step 6.</b></p> <p>If the answer is <b>Yes</b>, an ICIA must be prepared and <b>you should proceed to Step 5.</b></p> <p>To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?</li> <li>• Are these different effects likely?</li> <li>• Are these effects significantly different?</li> <li>• Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups?</li> </ul>	
Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	n/a
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	n/a
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	n/a
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	n/a
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	n/a
Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	n/a
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	n/a
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	Yes, consideration has been given to this with regards to community consultation and engagement, as many such events require staff members travelling from Mainland Orkney to a ferry-linked isle to run

	engagement events. The process for modernising tools and protocols with regards to ferry-linked isles will be considered as part of the working group taking this forward.
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	The effectiveness of consultation and engagement with communities living on the ferry-linked isles (and with other groups) will be measured, as set out on page 18.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	Outcome measure will be identified by the working groups tasked with each outcome within the framework of the Strategy.
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	This is a new Strategy and it aims to improve communications and engagement, including with all of Orkney's island communities.
How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	n/a
<b>Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA</b>	<b>Response</b>
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	No
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	Yes
Who will signoff your final ICIA and why?	The Head of Improvement and Performance as the strategy owner at a Head of Service level.

ICIA completed by:	Ross Cunningham
Position:	Service Manager (Democratic Services and Communications)
Signature:	
Date complete:	15 November 2024

ICIA approved by:	Alex Rodwell
Position:	Head of Improvement and Performance
Signature:	
Date complete:	15 November 2024