

# **Communication**

All partnerships will need to think about communication, to a greater or lesser extent depending on what you are trying to achieve. It is important to have good communication between partners, but this section deals with communicating outwards, to those affected or interested by the work of the partnership.

## **Who to communicate with?**

Along with the rest of the partnership, you will need to decide who you want to communicate with and to what extent. For example, a partnership such as the Community Safety Partnership will send out press releases on its achievements via one of its partners, whereas another partnership which is more concerned with influencing other agencies and organisations would not.

It is useful for the partnership to decide what approach it wishes to take to communication

- Does the partnership need/want to have a public profile?
- Is the partnership more about influencing and advising other partnerships and organisations, like the Social Inclusion Partnership? In which case, is a public profile necessary?
- Does the partnership need to engage with the community? How will partners do this? Direct communication with the public?
- If the partnership decides to not directly communicate with the public, will individual partners communicate with the public in their own capacity? (for example, the WDSP Board do not have a public profile as such, but the Board members do communicate with the public, various interest groups etc via their own organisations. Information from this is then passed back up to the Board)

## **When would a partnership need to communicate with others?**

There are several reasons why a partnership would need to communicate with others outside of the partnership:

- Spreading awareness of the work of the partnership
- To undertake consultation (it is very likely that other organizations or partnerships will be undertaking consultation at the same time as you. Contact the WDSP Board via your thematic representative to find out how you can join up with others to help your consultation, how you can share costs and avoid overloading the same people with consultation over and over again)
- To report back to partner organisations and anyone with an interest in the work of the partnership to make sure you have good lines of accountability
- To gain support and increase the influence of partnership

## **How?**

The Corporate Communications team at the City Council can give advice on the best methods of communication. Below are a few suggestions of how your partnership can communicate with other organisations and the wider public:

- Press releases on the partnership's successes
- Publishing annual reports,
- Annual meetings of the full partnership if the day to day business of the partnership is run by a steering group
- Create a partnership website (all partnerships can have space on [www.winchester.gov.uk](http://www.winchester.gov.uk))
- By using an email distribution list (you will need to check you have permission to use email addresses if you are sending out emails to your community)
- Use partners' newsletters
- Through the WDSP Board. This is a good way to communicate with other partnerships and to find out if there are common areas of work which you can collaborate on and share costs
- Contact voluntary, interest or resident groups. Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) can help you contact voluntary groups and the City Council can help put you in touch with resident groups

## **Talking to partners**

Whilst you need to give thought to how you communicate externally, it is very important that you maintain good communication within the partnership between formal meetings. There are lots of different ways in which this can be done, and all partners need to commit to communicating throughout the life of the partnership. As well as the usual methods of staying in touch by speaking on the phone or emailing, partners can also:

- use a partnership website to post new information to partners,
- produce a regular e-newsletter on the partnership's work and latest developments (or a paper newsletter if partners do not have access to email)

## **Communicating with Councillors**

The Corporate Communication team and the Committee Administration department at Winchester City Council can provide help and advice on communicating with elected Members from all tiers, but there are several existing routes that partnerships can use to get information to Councillors, as well as several points that should be borne in mind.

### **1 Websites**

As mentioned above, the City Council will provide space on its website for all partnerships to have pages. These pages can promote the partnership's work and give out information on what it is doing.

City and County Councillors all are able to access this website, and the majority of parish Councillors will be able to access the website either themselves or via their parish clerk.

Information such as partnership aims, partnership agreements, notes of minutes and ways to contact the partnership should be included on any web pages. A webpage can also be treated like a newsletter, updating Councillors and the community on the partnership's recent successes or activities. Contact the Corporate Communications team at the City Council for further information, 01962 848 504 or [ehodge@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:ehodge@winchester.gov.uk)

## **2 Members' Briefing Note**

The City Council has a newsletter which is sent out to all City Councillors every Friday. This can be used to update them on the work of your partnership or inform them of important meetings. Contact the Corporate Communications team on 01962 848 504 for advice on what can go into the briefing note and deadlines.

## **3 Parish Connect**

The City Council produces a monthly digest for the District's parish councils. This is a good way of getting information out to parish Councillors. To receive a copy of Parish Connect, or to submit an article on your partnership, contact the Corporate Communication team on 01962 848 504.

## **4 Through performance management**

Reporting back as part of your performance management process is a prime opportunity for communicating what your partnership has achieved with elected representatives. The next section of this toolkit, 'Elected Members and Partnerships' offers some advice on how to involve Councillors from all tiers of local government in your performance management process.

## **Councillors' role in communication**

Many partnerships in the District will have City, County, or Parish Councillors as members of the partnerships. With support from the partnership officers, these Members should also take a role in telling their fellow Councillors and people in their ward about the work of the partnership.

If an elected Member does not sit on a partnership, the responsible Portfolio Holder from the City Council's Cabinet should be kept informed of the partnership's work. This is important, as they will be expected by the Overview and Scrutiny Councillors to know about the work of partnerships in their particular portfolio area.

Of course, a Councillor also has a role to play in feeding information back from partnerships to their local community. They will be a figure that their constituents should know and recognise, and so they can play a vital role in communicating partnership work, where relevant, back to their electorate through their newsletters or any way that the member feels their ward would respond to best.