



Corporate Communications & Engagement Strategy



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April 2025

What this strategy means for you

Good communications and engagement are the responsibility of everyone who works at Kingston Council. Every officer and councillor has a role to play in helping tell Kingston's story, informing people how they can get involved in decision-making, explaining what our priorities are and how we are delivering for the communities we serve.

Driven by the [Council Plan \(2023 - 2027\)](#), the core of our communications and engagement strategy focuses on how we are collectively working towards making our Royal Borough **fairer, safer and greener, together**.

Why Kingston needs good communications and engagement

Through consistent, effective, inclusive and wide-ranging communications, aligned to the Council Plan, we can ensure that Kingston's residents and the wider community are clear on how to access services and informed about how the council is supporting them and providing value for money.

We can build stronger relationships with our communities by engaging residents early in two-way conversations using various engagement methods, helping shape effective local services and ensuring a wide range of perspectives are heard.

The role of the Communications and Engagement Team

We are a cross-council strategic function which supports the council's priorities and delivers clear, authentic and timely messaging and engagement to build trust, share key information and encourage participation in council decision-making. Our team works across multiple disciplines, collaborating with service colleagues, councillors, senior leadership, partners and other external stakeholders. We provide expert advice on effective engagement and research, focusing on involving residents and communities in policy development from the start.

Our audiences

Residents, council staff, councillors, partners, contractors, stakeholders, businesses, government and visitors.

We support the council in achieving its objectives in the following ways:

- **Proactive**
 - Strategic media and campaigns activity which contributes to delivering the council's priorities, informing and empowering communities, embedding inclusivity and celebrating Kingston's diversity.
 - Providing insight, advice and support to the Senior Leadership Team, councillors and services across the council.
 - Promoting and raising the profile of key council and community events, including community awards, arts and culture events and Remembrance Sunday.

- Encouraging robust early engagement and active participation from residents and communities.
- Ensuring coordination of engagement activities, making the most of resources, and aligning with corporate priorities.
- Generating income through filming opportunities, encouraging creative industry in the borough and boosting the local economy
- **Reactive**
 - Comprehensive media management, providing timely and accurate responses to journalists that highlight the council's strengths and strategic priorities, demonstrate transparency and counter misinformation.
 - Strategic communications management in emergencies or major incidents to warn and inform affected groups, keep people safe, support a coordinated response and aid recovery.
 - Oversight of responses to all Freedom of Information requests submitted by the media or may lead to media attention.
- **Engagement and participation**
 - Driving greater community participation and engagement through varied approaches, such as the Residents' Panel, focus groups and via community networks, to involve as many people as possible in shaping local services and Kingston's future.
 - Ensuring inclusivity in all initiatives, offering everyone the opportunity to participate.
 - Expanding participation to reach a broader and more diverse audience.
 - Providing timely feedback to residents and communities on next steps and how their input has influenced policies and decisions.
- **Internal communications**
 - Delivering effective and inspiring internal communications to support the development of an inclusive, productive, engaged and informed workforce.
 - Communicating the council's priorities and building understanding of how staff contribute to delivering on these through their work.
 - Empowering staff, many of whom are local residents, to champion the work of the council and share key information with their networks.
 - Driving culture change and improvement - engaging colleagues in our Stronger Together strategic vision and supporting the development of a workforce that feels motivated and empowered to deliver the best services for residents and communities.
- **Brand and style**
 - Protecting and enhancing the council's identity and brand, ensuring we're building trust by speaking with 'one voice' and residents recognise the council's role in supporting and enabling communities to thrive.

Are you climate ready?

Free tips, activities and challenges this Sustainable September.

Making a splash in Kingston

Visit www.transformkingston.co.uk

February 6, 2025

Gold rating for our social services

The ANDREAS KIRSCH Column
Leader of Kingston Council

The incredible impact our children's services have on the lives of young people in Kingston has been highlighted in our latest Ofsted inspection. I am extremely proud of all the work we do to support vulnerable adults and children across the borough. The service has been awarded the gold standard rating, which is to be "outstanding" in all the areas we inspect. This is testament to the dedication and hard work of all our staff, our exceptional and inspirational and committed volunteers and the support of our children and our people. The majority of the council's budget is spent on social care support for vulnerable adults and children. These needs are not all the same. We will continue to meet these needs, the initial budget for this year is £100 million. We are working hard to ensure that we provide care to make the best use of the money we are given to support these in need. This has led to some brilliant outcomes, bringing a real sense of purpose to our children's centres and youth services like family hubs that offer access to support in the different services that the

Celebrating Communities Awards 2024



KINGSTON 2025
Celebrating our past, present and future

Sport Culture Lifestyle

The Guardian

Society Law Scotland Wales Northern Ireland

• This article is more than 5 months old

Social workers in England begin using AI system to assist their work

Magic Notes tool records and analyses face-to-face meetings and suggests follow-up actions

Council promises 500 new jobs with 'enterprise hub' launched under John Lewis

By Oliver Monk 26th Jul 2024

Supporting you with rising living costs

Kingston Stronger Together
Supporting one another with the rising cost of living

Speak Up, Speak Out

Share your views now on ways you think we can make Kingston safer for you. Follow #SpeakUpSpeakOut

미래를 함께 만들자

Kingston을 위한 우리의 비전 2023-2041

TOLWORTH

20년 후 여러분의 지역은 어떨까요?

Kingston을 위한 새 지역 계획 만들기에는 여러분의 아이디어가 필요합니다. 계획은 가장 먼저 학교, 병원에서 공회당까지 필요한 것을 지원하고 있습니다. 이를 계획하기 위해 우리는 주민 여러분을 www.kingston.gov.uk/localplan 웹사이트를 방문하여 여러분의 생각을 한국어로 제공할 수 있습니다. 여러분의 의견은 2024년 10월 31일까지 유효합니다. 질문은 0203 000 000 6309로 전화하십시오. 지역 계획은 2024년 10월 31일까지 유효합니다.

Our priorities

We are working collaboratively across the council and with our partners and communities to transform our services and support residents in the best and most efficient way possible. This includes providing early support and using technology in innovative ways to help residents live more independent and fulfilling lives.

As a council we are providing the support, community connections and services to ensure everyone can live happy, prosperous and fulfilling lives with a consistent commitment to celebrating our culture and heritage, enhancing our environment and providing value for money.

1. Fairer

We are working with partners and communities to create a fairer borough, reducing inequalities and increasing opportunities for those most in need.

2. Safer

Kingston is one of the safest London boroughs and we are committed to making it even safer for everyone.

3. Greener

Looking for sustainable solutions to tackle climate change in all we do. Working with communities towards a net zero borough that protects and enhances our environment.

4. Together

We achieve more when we work together. We are committed to working with residents, communities and partners to make Kingston an even better place.

As a workforce, we're not just colleagues; we're a community. Together, we have the power to achieve extraordinary things and create a brighter future for ourselves and the communities we serve.

Communications and engagement activity supports the development of an engaged and well-informed workforce that feels empowered, valued and respected, and is committed to making the organisation a better and more inclusive place to work.

1. Creating a borough where every individual feels valued, heard and empowered

Our commitment to equity and fairness is at the heart of everything we do, ensuring that all voices are represented and celebrated.

2. Empowering people at every level

Equipping ourselves with the tools, information and support to lead with confidence and creativity to drive positive change for our communities.

3. Together, we are building a future where everyone in Kingston thrives

By prioritising joined-up working, we collaborate across the Council, with partners and wider communities to focus on shared positive outcomes that benefit the people we serve.

Where we are now - as a council

This is a critical time for the council as we look at how we manage increasing demand for support and services with ever-more challenging budgets.

We have a solid track record of delivering efficient and effective services, which achieve positive outcomes for our residents within an increasingly challenging financial context. Like most other councils, we are grappling with rising demand and costs. There are particular pressures in our demand-led services in housing, adult social care, and children's services. Managing these costs is our most important priority and we have taken swift action to meet this challenge.

We benefit from an engaged, skilled and committed workforce. Our workforce wants to stay with us and are motivated to deliver the very best services for our residents every day.

We are embedding [a prevention and wellbeing approach](#), setting out how we work alongside partners and communities to enable and empower our residents to live as happy and healthy lives as possible, and ensure those who need to are able to access the services and the support they require, when they need it.

- **Our challenges**

- Over **60%** of our **£190million** budget is spent on supporting vulnerable adults and children.
- We are **supporting over 1,600 adults** with long term needs for care, and a further 220 with short term needs aged 18+.
- We are **supporting over 1,000 children and young people** in need and almost 2,000 have an education, health and care plan.
- We are providing just over **1,000 families and individuals with temporary accommodation**.
- **31% of residents are deprived** in either their education, employment, health or housing.
- **13.1% (21,990) Kingston residents** declared themselves to have a disability as defined by the Equality Act (2010) in the 2021 Census.

- **Our successes**

- **Outstanding children's services** - OFSTED has awarded our children's services an 'Outstanding' rating for the second inspection in a row
- **One of the highest recycling rates** in London - 44.1% across the borough, fourth highest in London.
- **Delivering over 2,000 greener, safer new homes** for local people on Cambridge Road Estate and other sites across the borough.
- Kingston town centre ranked as **one of the best retail centres nationally** in the 2024 Newmark Vitality Ratings.
- Delivering a **brand new accessible leisure centre** in the heart of Kingston
- **Climate action** - retrofitted 66 social homes to improve energy efficiency, upgrading 9,000 street lights to energy efficient LED, saving £750,000 and preventing over 11,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over the next 25 years.
- **Supporting those living in poverty** - effective distribution of community grants and funding, including over £860k of the household support fund.

Where we are now - as a place

A place of heritage, identity and community

Kingston is a place with an important heritage. This year marks the 1100th anniversary of the crowning of King Athelstan in Kingston as the first king of a united England. We are celebrating with an exciting programme of public events, exhibitions and performances exploring the borough's diverse heritage. Our borough has a network of well-defined neighbourhoods and communities each with its own identity. Kingston is home to many communities, which contribute to a rich and diverse culture in the borough, including a well established Tamil community and the largest Korean community in Europe.

A place of opportunity and growth

Kingston may be one of the smallest London boroughs, but we make a big impact. We are one of the safest, cleanest and greenest boroughs in London and a destination for visitors, with a large shopping centre and collection of independent restaurants, cafes, markets and cultural venues. We are building on these opportunities through our ambitious regeneration programme, which includes creating over 2,000 new homes on Cambridge Road Estate, building a brand new leisure centre, and rolling out our community-led vision for Kingston town centre.

We are proud of our contribution to growing the economy locally, in London and nationwide through our partnerships with Kingston College, the globally-renowned Kingston University, and the many major employers who have chosen the borough as their base, notably Unilever, Lidl and Saipem.

The very large majority of our residents are highly skilled in technical, managerial and leadership roles. We know that most of our residents are self-sufficient, have high expectations of the services they receive from the council and other public services. However, balanced against this, there is a smaller number of residents who live in relative deprivation, whose outcomes and living standards are widely different from the majority of the population, and who need additional support from the council and our partners. We work collaboratively with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to support residents who need our help most.

A place of ambition and action

Kingston is a historic cultural centre, with a prime position on the River Thames and good connectivity to London and Surrey. The borough has plenty to offer people who live, work and visit us, from our natural environment to our heritage, culture, distinct neighbourhoods and town centres. We also have great schools, colleges and a world-class university.

We know that delivering our ambitions over the next few years is reliant on two key factors: our people and our partnerships. Kingston benefits from strong partnerships across public services, business, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. We have resourceful and resilient communities who are already doing a great deal to make Kingston a great place. The council works in partnership with our communities, our workforce and our strategic partners to amplify our impact and create even more opportunities for our residents to connect and thrive.

Our approach

Leading with digital and prioritising inclusivity

In line with the global shift from traditional to digital media, one of the council's primary platforms is the website (www.kingston.gov.uk). Our new Kingston.gov.uk website is currently in development and is expected to launch later this year. Web content adheres to the council's Plain English approach and embraces accessible design principles. Our social media channels and e-newsletters are also important digital platforms with growing audiences. We share content directly with our audiences via these platforms, driving them to the news, campaigns and service pages of the website to find more information or take action.

Alongside this, as part of the planning stage of any activity, insight and data as well as the team's experience and expertise, will inform what other channels or methods may be used to reach identified audiences. This may include adapting content - for example, into larger fonts, printed copies, translated or visual presentation through formats like video or an Easy Read version.

To reach diverse communities, we use a wide range of communications methods and channels, both digital and non-digital. Face to face engagement has a huge role to play in talking to our communities and hearing their thoughts, ideas and lived experience to help inform decision-making. We encourage services to get out into our vibrant, diverse communities to hear first-hand what residents have to say.

One of the ways in which we champion an inclusive approach to communications and engagement is through the work of the Involve Team, who are experts through lived experience of learning disability and autism. As part of their innovative work, the team advocates for inclusivity by providing advice and guidance to council teams and external partners, as well as creating documents in Easy Read.

Sharing content directly with audiences on council channels

We manage and use a variety of social media platforms and e-newsletters. These are important channels for sharing news, information and inspiring stories directly with our audiences. Content shared through these channels prioritises video, photo and graphic led content, using community voices wherever possible. We tailor content for the different audiences that follow us on each channel. We look to reach audiences who do not engage on council channels through targeted approaches, such as using Snapchat advertising to reach younger people and community WhatsApp groups to get deeper into communities. We encourage onward sharing of our content across local networks on the ground, to amplify reach.

Reaching people through trusted voices

We work with trusted voices within communities to encourage and empower them to share information with their networks, to help reach audiences who do not engage on council channels. These include religious representatives through the Kingston Faith and Belief Forum, voluntary sector partners, community leaders, councillors, employers, Kingston and Richmond Youth Council, and Kingston University Students' Union. Community voices help to amplify messages and increase reach among specific target groups.

Tone of voice and branding

The way we all communicate is vital. By being clear and respectful, using Plain English and avoiding jargon, we are making what we do as easy to understand as possible, reaching as many people as we can. We create all council materials in line with our Brand and Style Guidelines. By keeping to our brand identity, we are building trust, creating more opportunity for residents to recognise council activity, get involved and feel heard as we look to make Kingston better together.

How we engage with communities

We are committed to early engagement and strengthening the relationship between the council and the community - residents, businesses, students, and voluntary and community groups. Our goal is to 'hardwire' effective engagement into decision-making by involving residents early in the design of local services and the issues that affect them.

Our Community Engagement Framework, first introduced in 2019, has recently been refreshed (April 2025). It serves as a code of practice for us and our external partners when engaging with the communities of Kingston. It outlines our commitment to integrating effective engagement into our decision-making processes, ensuring it is a core part of how we work aiming to achieve better outcomes for everyone across the borough.

The framework details various ways in which we can engage with communities - from simply providing information to consulting, involving residents in conversations or activities, and collaborating with them to design and deliver services. As a council, we aim to empower residents and work alongside them to make decisions, shaping policy and transforming services.

Monitoring and evaluation

We are continuously learning and developing our approach. We use trusted national statistics such as the OFCOM media consumption survey and the Census, as well as local intelligence and information, to gather insight and inform what we do. We use a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to monitor engagement across our channels and evaluate the impact of our communications and campaigns. We use this insight to help improve our approach to targeting audiences, as well as ensuring value for money through any paid channels. As we move forward, we want to continue to test, adapt and evolve our communications and engagement approach - including carrying out research with our local communities about where they go for trusted information and testing our messaging and materials with our Residents' Panel.

Kingston's population: circa **168,000 residents** - Number of properties: circa **70,000**



Social media



8.5k
followers



5k
followers



13k
followers



48k
followers*



1.7k
followers



1k
members



18.7k
followers

*Followers automatically
subscribed when they set
up an account

Media

- Print and broadcast media
- Public noticeboards, lamppost banners
- JCDecaux print (paid) and digital boards
- Adverts and public notices in press, when appropriate (paid)

Networks and face to face

- Resident Panel **200+ members**
- Events / roadshows / displays
- Community forums (including the Faith and Belief Forum, Green Business Forum and Kingston & Richmond Youth Council)



Newsletters

produced by the Communications and Engagement Team

- 'Your Kingston' borough newsletter - **8,500+ subscribers**
- Kingston Let's Talk engagement newsletter **3,800+ subscribers**
- Business newsletter - **5,200+ subscribers**



Website

- Council website **4m page visits in 2024**
- Kingston Let's Talk engagement portal **103k page visits in 2024**



Internal channels

- Stronger Together staff newsletter **1,750 staff members**
- Managers' bulletin **300+ managers**
- Staff intranet **305k page visits in 2024**
- Staff Google chats **1,500+ members** on the main Staff Community chat
- Members' bulletin **142** councillors, GLA members, MPs and senior leaders
- Staff networks and forums
- **9 digital screens** across the Guildhall complex
- **22 office noticeboards** across the Guildhall complex

How we reach communities

We ensure council messaging is streamlined, easy to understand and delivered in a timely way. Based on the content, we will tailor the approach and which channels are used to effectively reach target audiences.

We are ambitious in our approach and are constantly looking at ways to innovate, new channels to use and how we can expand our reach.

Filming

We welcome filming in the Royal Borough of Kingston, it boosts the local economy and helps promote the borough as a wonderful place to live, work and visit. With the bustling riverside, Ancient Market Place and sweeping green fields, Kingston offers a huge variety of opportunities for film makers. Christmas campaigns for both Waitrose and Lidl, as well as MotherFatherSon and Silent Witness have all been filmed in the borough.

[FilmFixer](#) manages all filming requests on behalf of Kingston Council. By working to promote the borough as a film friendly location and maximising opportunities for filming to take place, we are creating the opportunity for new jobs, increased tourism and spending with local businesses. We carefully manage this process to ensure that production is always carried out in a way that minimises impact on residents and businesses.

Working together

The best way to get in touch with the Communications and Engagement Team is by email - communications@kingston.gov.uk and engagement@kingston.gov.uk. The more notice you give us about your project or initiative, the better we can advise and help you.

Through effective and inclusive communications and engagement, as set out in this strategy, we can all help build informed, engaged and empowered communities across the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.



If you have difficulty reading this document or would like it in a different format, please call our helpline on 020 8547 5000 or ask someone to call on your behalf.

