



Recycling Project Communications & Stakeholder Management Plan

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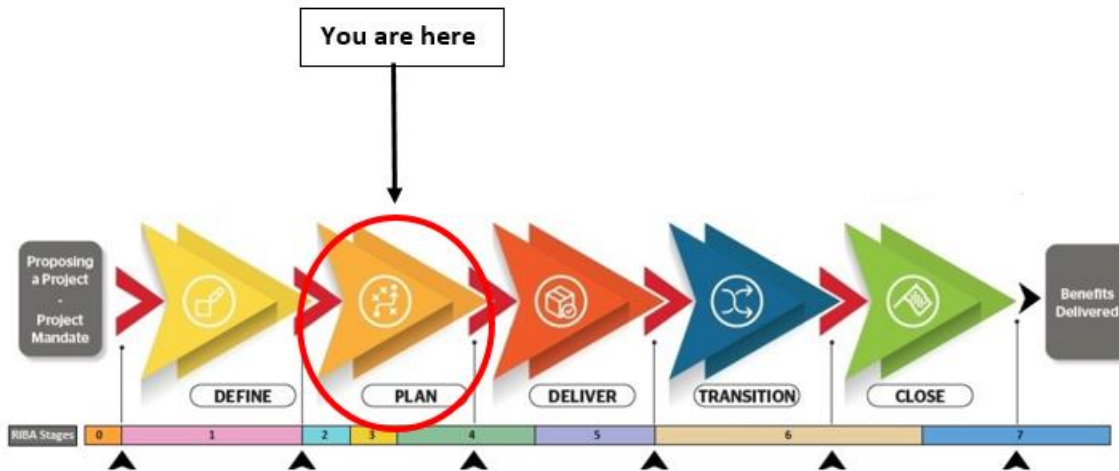
Paul Stacey – Project Sponsor

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Please note that this Communications Plan should be agreed by the Communications and Engagement team who will need to confirm that they have sufficient resource to deliver the plan, prior to final sign off at your Programme or Project Board.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



GUIDANCE

Communications Plan

- The Communications & Stakeholder Management Plan is used to manage the communications throughout the life of your project. It should be produced in the **'Plan'** phase of project if the project is anticipated to have significant communication and engagement requirements. You should work with a member of the council's Communications and Engagement team to complete the document.
- The document is intended to help assess the resourcing needs to deliver the communication and engagement requirements of the project.
- Following completion, all guidance notes *[blue]* should be deleted.
- The completed Quality Plan must be approved by the Project Sponsor before submitting to the Enterprise Programme Management Office (EPMO) for approval at least 10 working days before the EPMO Assurance Group (EPMO AG) meeting.

For further guidance, please contact the EPMO.

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1. Project Summary

[Provide a summary overview of the project and what it is seeking to achieve. Remember to include the overall timescales for the project and how long communications support will be required]

In response to Watford Borough Council’s (WBC) budget constraints and the need for more sustainable waste management practices, it has been suggested that the current mixed recycling collection should be changed from weekly to fortnightly. This strategic move aims to reduce operational costs, enhance efficiency, and contribute to our commitment to environmental stewardship.

In considering proposals, the council will work with its waste and recycling partner, Veolia. It will also review the national guidance, best practice, and the experience of other local authorities who have successfully implemented changes to their waste and recycling services.

Current proposals:

- Any household or low-rise property with 4 or more permanent residents can have an additional 240l bin (BIN: blue-lidded)
- Every resident who currently has a 140l recycling bin is entitled to swap for a 240l bin (BIN: blue-lidded)

Residents will be offered free bin delivered during roll out of the project. Once the service change is live, residents will either have to pay for a bin delivered or can collect for free during an allocated time. This will be communicated to residents during Direct Line 1 (DL1) and Direct Line 2 (DL2).

WBC and Veolia have the ability to use discretion to give additional bins to keen recyclers in smaller households upon assessment (those who use all of their bins correctly).

2. Communications and engagement objectives

[Insert here not the objectives of your project but the objectives of your Communications Plan. What are you seeking to achieve with clear and professionally managed communications throughout the life of the project. Please note that you may have different objectives for different audience groups. If so, you may find it easier to break this section down by audience, with different objectives for each]

The primary objective of this communications plan is to inform residents about the transition from weekly to fortnightly mixed recycling collections by Veolia. The plan aims to effectively communicate the benefits of this to residents and the environment, including cost savings, reduced carbon emissions, and alignment with regional practices.

2.1 Staff (both WBC and Veolia)

Ensure staff have a full understanding of the changes to Watford's recycling service so they can act as advocates for change.

- **WBC**
 - Waste and recycling team (responsible for supporting the implementation so they can advocate for change).
 - Communication team (responsible for developing the communication plan and for implementation and ongoing management of messages – both proactive and reactive)
 - Customer Service team (responsible for frontline enquiries and some elements of social media/support for website updates)
 - Mayor's office (responsible for monitoring and supporting direct enquiries to the mayor)
- **Three Rivers District Council**
 - Liaise with Communication team at Three Rivers District Council as this will effect houses on Boundary Way, who waste we collect.
- **Veolia**
 - Waste and recycling team (responsible for implementing the service change – including all frontline staff responsible for collections)

- Customer Service team (responsible for taking enquiries)

2.2 - Elected Members

- Ensure the Mayor and Portfolio Holder and Cabinet members are fully engaged with the proposals, receiving regular updates and sufficient opportunities for feedback on any changes to help shape the final recommendations.
- Ensure all members are fully informed about any changes to the waste and recycling service, including the reasons and the benefits implemented.
- Equip members with a 'communication toolkit' that they can use to disseminate information.

2.3 - Residents

- Ensure all residents are fully aware of proposed changes to the waste and recycling services well in advance of implementation and what this means for their household – this will mean early engagement and dissemination of messages through a full range of channels.
- Ensure all residents are fully aware of the benefits of any proposed changes and reason for change.
- Encourage the necessary behaviour change that will be required for successful implementation of any changes to the service.
- Encourage sustainable waste management and practices.
- Uphold the reputation of the council as a local authority that delivers high quality, responsive and value for money services for its residents.
- Ensure awareness and understanding of the change to the waste and recycling services among residents without digital access.
- Create clear and concise communication materials with larger fonts, simple language, and visual aids to cater to the needs of elderly residents.
- Collaborate with partners, housing associations and property management companies within the borough to distribute information through their channels.
- Foster a positive response and active participation in recycling changes amongst larger households.

3. Audience insight

[What do you know about the audience that you are trying to reach? Is there more than one stakeholder, and if so, will they be impacted by the project in diverse ways. What will this mean for how we need to communicate with them?]

Watford has circa 40,000 households. All these households receive waste and collection from WBC. We know from resident surveys that the waste and recycling service is one of the council’s most valued services and consistently receives high resident satisfaction ratings (90%+) and high engagement across all platforms (resident newsletters and social media).

Our population is diverse across several demographic factors. Watford has:

- 39% of residents are non-White British residents (Census, 2021). Any communications and engagement campaign to take in all Watford households needs to consider how to reach all the residents – which is why a mixture of channels will be critical to campaign.
- A younger than average population – our MOSIAC segmentation shows us that the Watford community is predominantly younger households, often living in apartments and with high propensity for using online services and social media. There is also a high proportion of younger families.
- The council has a strong social media presence, and these are proving important channels for a significant range of our population – however, the diversity of the population means that other channels will be equally important to a successful campaign.
- Watford has a relatively good recycling rate (currently around 48%) and has reduced the amount the borough sends to landfill year on year (currently around 435kg per household) but the aim will be to encourage even greater recycling and less residual.

3.1 Barriers to behaviour change – the COM-B model

| Capability Do our residents: | How barriers might be addressed |
|---|---|
| Have the right knowledge and skills? | Overall, households have a good understanding of the current waste and recycling regime in Watford. Any changes will require behaviour change supported by clear and consistent information. It is likely that people will focus on what they perceive to be the ‘loss’ from the current service. |
| Have the ability to do it? | Most households can take part in the waste and recycling service. An assisted collection is available for those who might need help. |

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| Know how to do it? | As above – people will need to be educated about the new service and its requirements / what is expected of them. We know from previous experiences that changes do take time to embed, and so ongoing communications will be essential to maintaining behaviours – particularly separating food waste from residual waste stream. |
| Opportunity Do our residents: | How barriers might be addressed |
| Have the resources to undertake the behaviour? | All necessary bins etc will be provided plus information to all homes explaining what is changing and what actions people need to take to make the most of the new service. |
| Have the right systems, processes and environment around them? | Yes – all this will be in place. |
| Have people around them who help or hinder them to carry it out? | Significant support available in terms of communications material and responses to enquiries during implementation of new system. |
| Motivation Do our residents: | How barriers might be addressed |
| Want to carry out the behaviour? | Motivation will be the biggest barrier to change in many cases. Those who are already committed to recycling should react positively to the opportunity to recycle even more of their waste and to separate food and garden waste. Those who are already committed to recycling should be receptive to more sustainable ways to recycle and how to best manage their waste. It will take a significant amount of outreach work to show the advantages to others. |

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| Believe they should? | See above. |
| Have the right habits in place to do so? | We will ensure to provide all the information required to make this a smooth transition for all residents. |

4. Key messages

[What key messages will you be seeking to convey? This may change as the project progresses so you may want to break this section down by the separate phases of your project]

Aligns with other councils in the county: Point out that eight out of ten councils in Hertfordshire, including St Albans with a Veolia waste contract, already collect recycling fortnightly, demonstrating alignment with regional practices.

Less frequent, not less recycling: This message emphasises the importance of maintaining consistent recycling efforts, despite the frequency of collection. It encourages individuals to remain committed to recycling practices, even if they recycle less often, highlighting that the act of recycling remains vital for environmental sustainability.

Service futureproofing: Communicate the opportunity to align services with other Hertfordshire councils, enabling efficiency savings via joint waste services in the future. Emphasise the need to future-proof the service against additional cost pressures.

Efficiency and cost savings: The change to fortnightly recycling collections is part of a strategic initiative to increase efficiency and reduce costs, resulting in a significant revenue saving for the council and less impact on other services the council/Veolia provide.

Aligns with WBC’s Sustainability Strategy and commitment to be net-carbon zero by 2030: Highlight the potential reduction in carbon emissions with fewer vehicles on the road for recycling collection, aligning with sustainability goals.

Fortnightly waste truck pickups will reduce congestion: By shifting to fortnightly waste and recycling collections, we aim to alleviate traffic congestion caused by frequent collections. This change enhances convenience for residents and improves the flow of traffic in Watford neighbourhoods.

Watford residents excel in recycling, boasting a commendable rate exceeding 50%: The community of Watford has demonstrated outstanding commitment to recycling, achieving a remarkable recycling rate of over 50%. This commendable achievement reflects residents' dedication to environmental sustainability and waste reduction efforts.

Weekly food waste collections remain unchanged, ensuring timely disposal: Despite adjustments to waste collection schedules, it's important to note that weekly food waste collections will continue without interruption. This ensures that organic waste is promptly disposed of, maintaining hygiene standards and minimizing potential nuisances.

The transition to fortnightly collections for refuse, recycling and waste streamlines operations: Consolidating refuse, recycling, food, and garden waste collections to a fortnightly schedule optimises operational efficiency. This streamlined approach simplifies waste management processes for both residents and waste management authorities, leading to more effective resource utilisation.

Changes will not impact flats, multi-unit dwellings, or commercial properties: It's important to highlight that the changes to waste collection schedules will not affect residents living in flats, multi-unit dwellings, or commercial properties. These entities will continue to follow existing waste management protocols, ensuring minimal disruption to their routines and operations.

5. Potential issues and challenges

[Are there any issues or challenges that you are aware of, which need to be specifically managed. Please give details of the issue and the specific plan to manage these]

Cost management – A clear budget must be allocated for the project and managed throughout to prevent financial risks and ensure effective resource utilisation

Time management – All officers working on the project must collectively work together to ensure the project is delivered in Autumn 2024 to avoid politically sensitive timings and minimize disruptions, especially around the festive season. Clear deadlines will be set to ensure expectations around workload must be managed to ensure there are minimal delays.

Scope control - Monitor and control the scope of the project to ensure the successful delivery of fortnightly recycling collections.

Resource allocation - Ensure effective management of resources, with the Waste and Recycling Service Delivery Leads (W&R SDLs) supported by the Senior Project Support Officer and the project team, as outlined in the Project Initiation Document (PID).

Engaging residents – Previous communications have shown that residents engage with materials related to waste collection/management. The change may be viewed negatively, and the key messaging will need to be handled sensitively.

Contradicting messages from previous campaign – Transitioning to fortnightly recycling collection contradicts messaging from previous service change, where residents were asked to use the recycling bin as their primary bin for waste disposal. We will address this risk with a proactive communications plan, highlighting the benefits of the service change, and reassure residents that the initiative aligns with broader sustainability goals and best practices in waste disposal. We will engage with Councillors and stakeholders to help us to raise awareness of the change.

Less consumption across the borough - Delicate messaging is required to manage potential reactions to the reduction in consumption resulting from increased recycling efforts. Collaborate with Sustainability Team to develop messaging that emphasises the positive impact of reduced consumption. Link this messaging with the ongoing #WorthSaving campaign to reinforce the importance of sustainable living and responsible consumption habits. Focus on empowering residents to make conscious choices that contribute to a greener future while addressing any concerns or misconceptions through transparent communication channels.

Possibility of a general election in October - A general election presents a considerable risk due to the potential for shifting political priorities and the diversion of public attention. During an election period, political discourse tends to focus on various campaign promises, economic policies, and social issues, sidelining topics like waste management. Changes in government leadership following an election could lead to shifts in funding, policies, and administrative priorities, potentially undermining the continuity and momentum of the communication efforts regarding waste and recycling services.

6. Communications Plan

[Provide below the diverse types of communications or stakeholder management that you have planned. This may be holding a resident stakeholder event, commissioning posters, launching a survey, or publishing latest information for residents, members, or businesses online, ether on the website or social media]

The Communications Plan will be split into two Direct Lines:

DL1

- Informing residents that the change is coming and providing them with all of the support they need before the change comes in, including the those who are applicable to apply for another bin with free delivery.
- New policy for additional recycling bins will be included in DL1 and across the website.

DL2

- Informing residents the service change is live and helping them to adjust with tips, support and advice. Residents who are applicable will still be able to apply for an additional bin, or larger bin.

| Activity | Action/message | Owner | Cost | Timing |
|--|---|--|-------------|------------------|
| <p>Online (https://www.watford.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-collections)</p> | <p>Update webpage with service change information, including schedules, guidelines, FAQs and contact information for enquiries.</p> | <p>Web Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June 2024</p> |
| <p>Online (www.watford.gov.uk/news)</p> | <p>Create a news story on the website with service change information, including schedules, guidelines, FAQs and contact information for enquiries.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June 2024</p> |
| <p>Local forums (DL1)</p> | <p>Have a representative from Veolia at council and partner forms (including Sustainability and W3RT Seniors Forum) to discuss the changes and addresses any concerns from residents.</p> | <p>Veolia/Waste & Recycling Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June 2024</p> |
| <p>Resident newsletter (DL1)</p> | <p>Send an email to subscribers to Watford Borough Council resident newsletter with key messages from DL1, signposting residents to webpage with service change information, including schedules, guidelines, FAQs and contact information enquiries.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June 2024</p> |
| <p>Press release (DL1)</p> | <p>Create a press release to send to local media with key messages from DL1, signposting residents to webpage with service change information, including schedules, guidelines, FAQs and contact information enquiries.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June 2024</p> |

| Activity | Action/message | Owner | Cost | Timing |
|--|--|------------|------|--------------|
| Leaflet to all households (DL1) | An informational leaflet will be distributed to all households that will be affected by the change. | Veolia | TBC | June 2024 |
| Social media (DL1) | Create a social media campaign to support messages in DL1, sign-posting residents to FAQs and contact information for enquiries. | Comms Team | £200 | June 2024 |
| Members bulletin (DL1) | Create a toolkit for members to distribute to their residents with key messages for DL1, including email, social media and FAQs. | Comms Team | FREE | June 2024 |
| Collection calendar/leaflet (DL2) | Create an extended collection calendar to be distributed to all households that will be affected by the change. | Veolia | TBC | October 2024 |
| Social media (DL2) | Post across social media platforms to support messages in DL2, sign-posting residents to FAQs and contact information for enquiries. | Comms Team | £200 | October 2024 |
| Members bulletin (DL2) | Create a toolkit for members to distribute to their residents with key messages for DL2, including email, social media and FAQs. | Comms Team | FREE | October 2024 |

| Activity | Action/message | Owner | Cost | Timing |
|--|---|-------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| <p>Resident newsletter (DL2)</p> | <p>Send an email to subscribers to Watford Borough Council resident newsletter with key messages from DL2, signposting residents to webpage with service change information, including schedules, guidelines, FAQs and contact information enquiries.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>October 2024</p> |
| <p>About Watford Autumn/Winter 2024</p> | <p>Include article and information residents about the service change with DL2 messages.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>October 2024</p> |
| <p>Partner communication channels</p> | <p>Reach out to housing associations and property management companies to inform them of the change and ask them to share across their channels to residents.</p> | <p>Comms Team</p> | <p>FREE</p> | <p>June/October 2024</p> |

7. Resources

[Provide details of the resourcing required to deliver this Communications & Stakeholder Management Plan. This should be agreed with the Head of Communications and Engagement in advance]

Official letters/notices: Mail official letters/notices to all residents explaining the changes, the reasons behind them, and the benefits. Include details on the broader context of the Veolia contract and the potential cost savings.

Social media platforms: Utilise community social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to share updates, answer questions, and generate discussions. Consistently post key messages and infographics.

Community website: Post detailed information on the community website, including FAQs, collection schedules, and resources. Provide links to relevant reports and studies supporting the change.

Local newspaper/magazine: (About Watford, Autumn 2024) Publish articles or press releases in local newspapers and magazines to reach a broader audience. Address the context of the Veolia contract and the financial implications for the council.

A5 leaflet/drop (DL1): Create a visually appealing and dynamic leaflet that will explain the changes that are coming and provide a timeline for the changes.

Collection calendar/leaflet (DL2): Create an expanded collection calendar for residents including tips and advice on creating space in their bins.

The costliest element of the communication and engagement plan will be door-to-door leaflet drops. An evaluation will need to be done on staff resource beyond that available within the current WBC communications team and Veolia.

8. Evaluation

[Provide details of how you will evaluate the impact of your stakeholder management and project communications. How will you know that you have met your objectives?]

Reach - Measure the total number of individuals or households reached by the communication campaign. This will include website visits, local media, social media impressions and email opens, etc.

Engagement – Track the level of engagement with communication materials, such as likes, shares, comments and retweets, or click-through rates on links provided.

Sentiment – Monitor the sentiment surrounding the campaign by analysing feedback, comments, or mentions through social media platforms and other channels.

Behaviour change – Measure changes in behaviour or actions because of the change, such as better recycling practices, opt-in for a larger bin/additional bins. Work with Veolia to track how many households request an additional/larger bin and also monitor bin capacity.

Website traffic – Analyse website traffic metrics such as unique visitors, page views, time spent on the site and bounce rates to gauge the effectiveness of online communication efforts.

Cost effectiveness – Evaluate of communication activities by comparing resources invested (e.g. time, money, manpower) to the achieved outcomes and impact.

By incorporating these evaluation metrics into the communications plan, organizations can effectively measure the success and impact of their efforts and make informed decisions to optimise future communication strategies.