

1. Background Information

The Communications and Marketing Agency was established in April 2006 to drive greater efficiencies, both qualitatively and quantitatively, across Bolton Council's consultation and research, marketing, design and communications activities. The Agency also has a key remit to help raise the profile of Bolton through the evolution and management of the Bolton brand, working with partners across the borough.

The Agency is structured into four teams to provide a professional and efficient service across different areas of the organisation and to its partners and partnerships. The four teams are as follows:

- Consultation and research
- Marketing Bolton
- Marketing
- Communications and media

Integrated working across the teams on key priorities for the organisation is in place to ensure efficiencies and utilisation of the resources.

2. Consultation and Research

The consultation and research team provides an invaluable service across the council and wider partners. The team support the development and evaluation of council policies, monitor satisfaction of customers and stakeholders and gather supporting evidence to shape council services and prioritise spend. Research and consultation plays a vital role within value for money service reviews, scrutiny, PDGs and the legislative duty to consult e.g social care.

When compared to external consultancy provision, the council's in-house consultation and research team compares favourably on price. The team's understanding of departmental challenges and context also enables them to advise effectively on best practice to gain relevant and valuable intelligence whilst avoiding duplication, without wasting time or money. National Government initiatives recognise the importance of involving the views of local people in service design and the team provide valuable evidence to feed into and inform priorities.

3. Marketing - (Marketing and Marketing Bolton)

The marketing teams play an integral role within the delivery of services and projects across the council and partners. Marketing forms part of strategic planning, ensuring that developments, schemes and projects meet the needs of service providers and service users alike, ensuring communities are aware of the many different services the council provides, and thus increasing the value of the services themselves and the council's reputation as a whole.

The team works closely with departmental DMTs across the council and are called upon by key partners to devise strategies, marketing plans and solutions that take into account budgets available and achieve effective campaigns whilst ensuring outcomes are achieved.

The team project manage and commission work from suppliers, providing significant VFM savings, advise on the best methods of reaching appropriate audiences using a wide range of tools and mechanisms as well as challenge methods of working and supporting service improvements for customers.

The council's in-house design team provides a key design function to the Agency and is instrumental in new ways of working across all new media channels.

The Bolton brand has become a recognisable signature for the Bolton Family and the team is charged with ensuring its values and integrity are retained.

4. Communications and Media

The media and communications team is responsible for managing the council's reputation at a local, regional and international level. The team looks after both internal and external communications and delivers corporate publications that promote the council as a whole i.e. Bolton Scene and The Bolton Plan. The team also helps to support staff engagement and empowerment through the use of robust communications methods, including the staff magazine, weekly email bulletins and team briefings.

Media officers handle dozens of media enquiries each week, as well as proactively distributing communications and press releases each year, promoting positive messages and information about the council's work. This activity is monitored and reported upon to members and officers on a regular basis.

The team also delivers strategic communications planning, ensuring big issues are reported to the media and residents in a planned, co-ordinated and balanced manner.

Press conferences and briefings, photocalls and interviews that support projects, schemes and big issues are all also managed to ensure effective reputation management.