Cheshire West & Chester Council

Communications Plan

Cheshire West and Chester

Cheshire West Crowd

Campaign name:	Cheshire West Crowd – Example Comms Plan	
Communications lead:	Victoria Chowdhury (Community Campaigns and Communications Officer)	
Service and external contacts:	Jane Makin (Locality Manager) Selina Simpson (Community Engagement)	Sarah Nickolds (Spacehive)

Background

As part of our campaign for the Cheshire West Crowd, we developed a communications plan, helping us identify our key audience and the best ways we can engage with them.

There are four key audiences we engage with and we have key messages for each to encourage them to interact with the Cheshire West Crowd in various ways.

- **Community projects** – we want them to use the Cheshire West Crowd for their crowdfunding campaigns.

- **Residents**– they might have an idea for a community project or want to donate towards projects on the Cheshire West Crowd.

- **Businesses**– they might want to donate towards projects on the Cheshire West Crowd as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR policies) or organisational aims.

- **Councillors**– they can play an important role with encouraging projects to use the Cheshire West Crowd and many of them will contribute towards projects through their member budgets.

A clear strategy with different phases

In our approach to communicating about the Cheshire West Crowd, there have been four very distinct phases, providing a regular focus for our campaign during each.

- **Phase one**– holding a launch workshop for the Cheshire West Crowd funding round and driving as much traffic as possible for people and organisations to sign up.

- **Phase two**– the application window and encouraging as many community projects as possible to come forward, register their project on the Cheshire West Crowd and pitch to the Council for funding.

- **Phase three**– community projects are live on the platform, calling for donations and , if eligible, being considered for Council funding, so communications focus on supporting their crowdfunding journeys. A particular focus is on encouraging contributions

from a wide range of backers, including community backers (those that will directly benefit from the projects), businesses (potentially utilising their CSR) and philanthropic donations.

- **Phase four**– the funding round closes and as project crowdfunding campaigns end, providing the chance to highlight the success of the round and how the Council has supported projects across the borough.

Maximising Council and partner channels

Through our communications plan, we looked at some of the best channels for us to use for our campaign.

We've taken advantage of a wide range of channels managed or owned by the Council.

- Council website, plus the dedicated Spacehive page
- Social media channels – Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram
- enewsletters – Council enews (approximately 9,000 subscribers), Climate Emergency enewsletter (approximately 5,300 subscribers)
- Press releases, engaging with the local media
- Member briefings, directly engaging with local councillors
- Digital screens at key locations across the borough, such as Chester Market, Chester Town Hall, Winsford Cross Shopping Centre and others

Alongside the Council's digital channels, the Communities team has played an integral role with holding drop-in sessions across the borough, providing an opportunity for people to discuss any community projects they might have in mind.

This is just one small part of the team's involvement in communicating with projects, with the team available as a point of contact and support throughout a project's crowdfunding journey, from an idea, to registering that idea, to pitching for funding, to running their crowdfunding campaign.

While we've had success using the Council's channels, engaging with key partners and stakeholders has been one of the big successes of the Cheshire West Crowd.

- **Cheshire West Voluntary Action** – the charity supports hundreds of community sector organisations in west Cheshire and has been able to engage with projects by both location and theme about the Cheshire West Crowd and the opportunities it creates.
- **Cheshire Association for Local Councils** (ChALC) – this is a support organisation for parish councils across west Cheshire and has been a key factor in getting parish councils running projects on the platform.
  West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce – this organisation works with businesses in the area and has helped us communicate with many local businesses that have gone on to support projects either by financial donations or in kind.
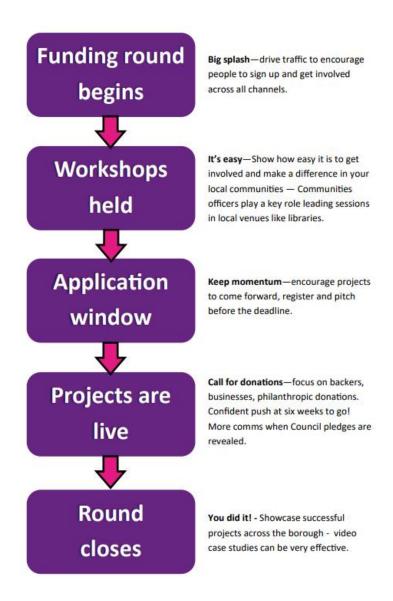
Communication objectives

Implement a programme of communication activities to ensure as many people as possible get involved and share and record their memories to contribute to the project:

- Develop an engaging brand for Cheshire West Crowd that can be used consistently
- High quality, easy to understand content to allow as many projects as possible to get involved.
- Communicate in as many channels as possible to encourage both participation and donations
- Encourage staff to spread the word about Cheshire West Crowd
- Positive coverage in newspapers, on-line and other media channels
- Positive engagement on social media across all Council-owned channels (and in community-owned accounts too where possible).
- Keep the momentum of the platform going to ensure maximum participation

SMART (measurable) objectives

- XX projects on the pipeline per round
- XX social media messages during each phase of a funding round / two successful case studies
- 100% hit rate for media releases, etc

Funding round flowchart:

Funding round begins

Big splash—drive traffic to encourage people to sign up and get involved across all channels.

Workshops held

It's easy—Show how easy it is to get involved and make a difference in your local communities — Communities officers play a key role leading sessions in local venues like libraries.

Application window

Keep momentum—encourage projects to come forward, register and pitch before the deadline.

Projects are live

Call for donations—focus on backers, businesses, philanthropic donations. Confident push at six weeks to go! More comms when Council pledges are revealed.

Round closes

You did it! - Showcase successful projects across the borough - video case studies can be very effective.

Strategy and tactics

External communications

Channel	Activity	Audience	Timescale	Aims	Who
Graphics and signage	Brief Graphics to design a suite of materials for use across all channels – web banner, social media banner, stats update graphic, pull-up banner, etc.	All residents/ Potential projects	ASAP	Create a consistent look and feel for the Cheshire West Crowd platform	DONE by Ryan
Media	Media releases for key milestones: • Launch of funding round • Workshops announced • Projects are now live – pledges/donations • Council pledges • End of round – case study/success stories	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Raise awareness / create projects / generate donations	Ongoing - VJC
On-line/web	Cheshire West Crowd website	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Focal point of the platform – all comms can direct people to this.	DONE
Events	Create events in communities to make it easy for people to access advice and support.	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Enable Communities teams to work closely with local project groups.	On-going with Communities teams

Channel	Activity	Audience	Timescale	Aims	Who
Social media	Messaging across all the Council's social media channels – X, FB, Instagram, LinkedIn	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Create and maintain awareness of Cheshire West Crowd	VJC
Enewsletters	Ensure Cheshire West Crowd content appears in appropriate enewsletters issued by Council services – Economic Growth team, Communities teams, Corp Comms.	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Create and maintain awareness of Cheshire West Crowd	VJC
Digital screens	Visuals promoting CWC on digital screens across the borough	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Create and maintain awareness of Cheshire West Crowd	VJC
YouTube/ video	Case studies and promotional videos	All residents/ Potential projects/ backers	On-going	Create and maintain awareness of Cheshire West Crowd	VJC

Stakeholder specific activities

Stakeholder	Activity	How?	Timescale	Who?
Residents	General invitation for project creators to get involved	Media releases Social media Member and Communities team engagement	On-going throughout funding round	ALL
Communities team	Key element of all comms – direct contact with communities, encouraging participation	Through community events in local venues like libraries	On-going throughout funding round	JM/SS
Economic Growth team	Article written for their regular enewsletter to local businesses	Articles in enewsletter to reach business audience	On-going throughout funding round	VJC
CHALC (Town and Parish Councils)	Articles in their e-bulletin promoting various stages of the funding round.	Article in weekly bulletin	On-going throughout funding round	SS/VJC
Members	Briefings regarding the platform and various stages – facilitate pledges from member budgets	Member briefing system	On-going throughout funding round	JM/SS
Trusts and foundations	Research local, regional and national trusts and foundations – direct email to provide information on projects they may want to support.	Direct email	For live projects	VJC
Cheshire West Voluntary Action	They are able to support our communications and work with hundreds of community sector organisation in the borough.	Direct liaison with main contact (Ryan) - email	On-going throughout funding round	VJC

Stakeholder	Activity	How?	Timescale	Who?
Chamber of Commerce	Provide information for their publications	Email	On-going	VJC

Example timetable:

- Launch from w/c *XX XXXXXX*
- Support sessions at local libraries: (*Month*) to (*Month*)
- Workshop 1 (delivered by Spacehive): (*date*) and Workshop 2 (repeat): (*date*)
- Optional session: Pitch clinic - w/c *XX XXXXXXX* - Optional extra - Opportunity for projects in the pipeline to hear in more detail about the funds, the criteria, exactly what you're looking for, guidance on how to answer the questions brilliantly. New projects in the pipeline would be sent the best workshop recording in advance so everyone is up to speed. We can also use this session to have a verification clinic, and make sure projects are more prepared for a speedy verification.
- Deadline for projects/pitches to be added to the platform: XX XXXXXXX
- Council assessment: w/c XXX XXXXXXX
- Big comms push: XXXX XXXXXXX **-** With most pledges on by XXXXXXX, we can do a confident comms push and business engagement while the campaigns still have six weeks to go.
- Last date to hit target: XX XXXXXXXX - Communicate this clearly to projects. It also means campaigns shouldn't be longer than 3 months, which is optimal. Large campaigns can always start earlier. This also means if projects need a short extension, we can discreetly offer it up to 12 extra days till the XX XXXXXXX and be more confident that all projects will have hit their targets ahead of purdah.
- Note: Council funding will be withdrawn from projects that don't hit their funding target by XX XXXXX.

Cheshire West Crowd - Communication approvals process	
Action:	**Feedback response time:**
Comms lead emails draft release/message to (contacts involved) for response	Within 24hrs
Comms lead email updated release/message to (contacts involved) for response	Within 24hrs
Comms lead shares updated release/message with the Leader and HoS for approval	ASAP
Release/message issued	Ideally within four working days of draft being shared
Please note: To prevent information being issued incorrectly comms will not be sent unless the above responses are received by Comms Lead.	

Communications schedule		
Date:	**Activity:**	**Channel:**
w/c Start date	Big splash – launch the autumn 2022 round, promote large funding pots, encouragement to join crowd, share support available. Member Briefing, media release, social media messaging, internal comms and support email.	Media release, social media, internal comms and direct emails asking to disseminate message across the following networks- voluntary organisations, town and parish council networks, Libraries, Communities, Housing, Chamber, BIDs, large funders, etc.
w/c (7 days later)	1. Direct email to Members asking them to share launch and support info plus CWC flyers widely in their local communities 2. Encourage communities officers to meet with Members to identify possible projects and help community organisations to shape projects. 3. Communities officers delivery information sessions in local venues like libraries. 4. Town and parish council case study one with support info for them to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and share our message within their local communities.	Direct emails for wider circulation. Follow up by Localities teams to meet councillors.
w/c (7 days later)	Film two project creators – sharing their CWC success story and encouraging others to get involved and benefit from this new funding source. Max five mins for each workshop and then footage to be used for social media messaging later. Backup footage – invite them to join and speak live and if not, available clip played.	Workshop followed by social media
w/c (7 days later)	Town and parish council case study two with support info for town and parish council networks to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and circulate/display our message within their local communities.	Town and parish council networks
w/c (7 days later)	Film project creator preparing their campaign, include project details to show other groups across the borough an example of what's possible and encourage them to replicate.	Social media and targeted comms with support info

w/c (7 days later)	Town and parish council case study three with support info to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and circulate/display our message within their local communities.	Town and parish council networks
w/c (7 days later)	Media release with new project example (shows not to wait to deadline and start application now), push upcoming workshop, share create project link and support available.	Media release, social media and direct emails as per launch. Share in Locality distribution lists.
w/c (7 days later)	Town and parish council case study four with support info for them to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and circulate/display our message within their local communities.	Town and parish council networks
w/c (7 days later)	Social media message – another new project example added to the platform. Get involved, create a project link and support info	Social media
w/c (7 days later)	Town and parish council case study five with support info to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and circulate/display our message within their local communities.	Town and parish council networks
w/c (7 days later)	Project creator success stories (prepared for workshops) shared with create a project link and support info	Social media
w/c (7 days later)	Media release – Final push …one month to go until deadline. Get involved, create a project link and support info.	Media release, social media and direct emails as per launch
w/c (7 days later)	Town and parish council case study six with support info to share. Want towns and parishes to get involved and circulate/display our message within their local communities.	Town and parish council networks
w/c (7 days later)	Social media message – another new project example added to the platform. Get involved, create a project link and support info	Social media
w/c (7 days later)	Send all project creators on the pipeline a list of other funders who may be able to provide funding (pre-campaign) if applied for within their parameter.	Direct email
w/c (Around 6 weeks later)	Promote council pledges. Link to project page and encourage others to support a local project.	Internal message and external social media

About a month later…	With most pledges on do a confident comms push and business engagement while the campaigns still have six weeks to go to their funding deadline.	Media release, targeted business comms via Chamber and business e-newsletter	

Internal comms

CHANNEL	ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE	TIMESCALE	AIMS	WHO
Hub (iWest)	Publicise the Cheshire West Crowd on the homepage	All staff	At launch –	Encourage staff to take part	Vicky Organise through Gina/EComms
Keeping InTouch weekly email	Publicise the various stages of Cheshire West Crowd via the global staff email.	All staff	At launch –	Encourage staff to encourage family members to take part	Vicky to speak to Gina B
Contact centre	Ensure contact centre is fully briefed on Cheshire West Crowd.	Contact Centre staff	Before launch	Contact centre is able to answer queries regarding the platform if needed.	Vicky to speak to Rachel Webb

Evaluation (How we will measure the success of these communications)

See SMART objectives section.

Feedback

Wider promotion on project outcomes will be publicised via the Council's website, video case studies and a press release.

APPENDIX A– Examples of social media messaging

Message	Channel
(16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Community projects like Petty Pool have successfully used the Cheshire West Crowd to crowdfund, attracting a pledge from the Council. 💸 Other projects are still looking for support with their campaigns. More ➡️ https://t.co/gK0JENYQ21 https://t.co/2A5o5lTF5z" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 The Council has pledged nearly £8,000 to Calm Coffee Group CIC as part of its crowdfunding campaign on the Cheshire West Crowd. 💬 "We're hoping to create a really warm and safe space for people to come with their little ones." Community projects ➡️ https://t.co/OR9ENS957z https://t.co/ctEaMq9HRn" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💜 The Joshua Tree is using the Cheshire West Crowd to raise funds and develop the charity so it can support more young people and families affected by childhood cancer. 💬 "We just want to put a smile on people's faces." More ➡️ https://t.co/tIPOsvGrGn https://t.co/NazupfXtTZ" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Many different projects like KidsBank Chester are using the Cheshire West Crowd to run crowdfunding campaigns. 💸 Could you support any of these projects? Check them out ➡️ https://t.co/FOUfdNYliG https://t.co/k2ncnpDEpa" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Your project could make the most of the Cheshire West Crowd like Tilston Parish Council to raise much-needed funds. 💬 "At the start of this, I thought it was going to be difficult, but it did become easy, especially with all the help we got." More ➡️ https://t.co/1rySn5kS1o https://t.co/VmhgPhElMu" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Many different community projects are running crowdfunding campaigns on the Cheshire West Crowd, calling on the support of local people and organisations. Could you help them reach their crowdfunding target? Projects ➡️ https://t.co/quy02BqIDv https://t.co/ymo3AdqFVy" / X (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Is your community project looking for funding? You can use the Cheshire West Crowd like Castle Park Arts Centre did. 💬 "The whole community really put their backs into it." Get involved ➡️ https://t.co/ROCqNipzQa https://t.co/L7wbe4YxCh" / X Workshops - (16) Cheshire West on X: " 💰 Want to hear about the Cheshire West Crowd and how it could help you crowdfund? Online workshop ➡️ https://t.co/YV0yriBXxI Drop-in sessions ➡️ https://t.co/xJK0gr0HVU ℹ️ Since the Cheshire West Crowd first launched, projects have collectively raised nearly £1.6 million. https://t.co/1YBtvbX0q5" / X	X

Cheshire West and Chester Libraries @cwaclibraries · Jul 6, 2023
Do you have a great idea or project but are struggling to find ways to fund it? Why not call in to Neston Library on Friday, 5pm–6.30pm, and find out how **Cheshire West Crowd** can help.
Don't miss out on this great opportunity to make your project a reality
cwac.co/V82ml

An exciting crowdfunding initiative, empowering people to create local projects that will make a positive difference in their community.

[(13) Video | Facebook](#)

[(13) Video | Facebook](#)

[(13) Video | Facebook](#)

[(13) Video | Facebook](#)

Cheshire West @Go_CheshireWest
💰 Are you involved with a community project and looking for funding? The Cheshire West Crowd not only provides crowdfunding support so you can gather the backing of your local community, but you can also attract funding from the Council.

Get involved ➡️ cwac.co/oK522

Empowering people to create and crowdfund local projects that will **make a positive difference in their community.**

ALT Create your own project at: spacehive.com/movement/cwc

Facebook

Cheshire West and Chester Council
20 September at 11:02 · 🌐
🌱 The Council has handed out more than £100,000 as part of the latest funding round on the Cheshire West Crowd. 💜 Find out about projects where you live 🌱 http://cwac.co/rxCTS

Empowering people to create and crowdfund local projects that will **make a positive difference in their community.**

APPENDIX B – Branding examples

Creating a consistent look and feel for our campaign - As part of our campaign, we've created a wide range of resources to support our communications, such as:

- social media graphics for various platforms

- digital screen artwork

- pull-up banners for events

- posters for individual projects to use and adapt for themselves.

All of our resources have a consistent look and feel so they're instantly recognised as being linked to the Cheshire West Crowd. Here are some examples of the resources we've created.

Social media banner

Graphic and pull-up banner: