

Appendix A

Scutiny visit to the City of Lincoln Council – 21 November 2012 with Councillor Howard Borrell and John Fern, communications and marketing manager.

Their set up is:

- A communications manager who plays a largely strategic role.
- A senior communications officer
- A communications officer
- Communications apprentice

They also have a website content editor based in another department (Business Development).

Publications

They produce the Your Lincoln magazine for residents three times a year at a cost of £9,000. Has proved fairly popular.

Local media

They have a good range of local media who give excellent coverage of both the council's work and also the area as a whole. This is helped by the fact they are the main settlement in the area – everybody focuses on Lincoln as there are no major towns or cities around them.

Get good coverage from the Hull and Humberside version of BBC Look North and to a lesser degree from ITV Calendar News. They have BBC Radio Lincolnshire and two independent radio stations.

The Lincolnshire Echo is now a weekly paper but still gives good coverage of the city.

The big new arrival in the past few years has been the Lincolnite – an online magazine.

As part of the visit we went to meet the owner of the Lincolnite who discussed their strategy for growth. They decided to focus on:

- Breaking news stories first and covering the city well
- The social side of the city eg bars, clubs, restaurants, theatres, shows, festivals etc
- Search engine optimisation – to make sure they are the first people that you find when putting Lincoln news into Google and doing the same for other popular search phrases.
- Good photography – they employ their own photographer but use the photography of others too eg the city council

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They have a really well developed strategy linking their Twitter and Facebook content to the main website and large groups of followers on all platforms.

They use analytics to know exactly what works and what doesn't. It also tells them the time to issue information eg they said that information issued 10 minutes to an hour will have a bigger impact than at other times as people who work in offices will often work for 50 minutes and then just do a quick check of social media before getting back to work. Timing information just before lunch time and evening meals also gets good results.

Website

The council's PR team don't have the control over the website's development that they need because the website content editor is based in another department. However, they are involved in a channel shift drive – getting more people to access services online rather than in person or on the phone.

Social media

They have three corporate Twitter accounts and three corporate Facebook accounts.

The main Twitter account has 6,980 followers and Facebook has 310.

Their biggest sites are the Lincoln Christmas Market social media accounts – 16,385 followers on Facebook and 10,000 on Twitter. They built these up by issuing press releases about the Lincoln Market to the tourism/events sections of weekly and daily newspapers across the country. Only a few published it but it is such a tourism draw that people want to know about it.

Campaigns

Their main current campaign is a community cohesion campaign.

Background.

Two related issues. One is getting the large influx of students living in some areas living in harmony with locals who feel they are being pushed out.

The other is the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, and the integration of them with the existing communities.

The city has recently given permission for a mosque and this has led to English Defence League rallies.

Campaign – This has a diary of events that brings out opportunities to celebrate community cohesion successes eg Black History Day, World Hello Day (which encourages people to say hello and have a chat with a neighbour or someone in their community that they wouldn't normally speak to).

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Evaluation

Due to resources they struggle to develop effective ways of evaluating campaigns or media relations campaigns.

One thing they do with their big campaigns is to ask the Lincolnite and other online publications how many people have read stories about that particular topic. This can then be used alongside newspaper cuttings to give a more effective overall picture of who has actually seen a campaign.