

**Electoral Services**  
**Borough Ward and General Election**  
**Communications Strategy**

**Introduction**

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010 each Runnymede Borough Ward will have one vacancy contested and the possibility of a General Election being called on the same day.

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to promoting the elections over three phases:

1. Pre-election
2. Election night
3. Post-election

Each of these periods will require key messages and specific activity relating to the election. However, the over-arching message must be that the Council will run a fair and secure election where everyone who is entitled to vote, does so.

**Corporate Strategic Aims**

The corporate strategic aims are detailed in a document "Stay in touch" that gives as its main strategic aims to raise understanding and awareness of the Council, its services, the role of Councillors and the democratic process

- To build and maintain an effective two-way dialogue between the Council and the full range of individuals and groups across the borough and beyond
- To influence behaviour, deliver 'public education' messages and to contribute to positive outcomes
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the Borough Council by promoting effective communication between the authority and partner agencies and key decision makers
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council itself through supporting effective internal communications
- To work with partners to market the borough more widely

To raise understanding and awareness of the Council, its services, the role of Councillors and the democratic process

In addition to this document the Council has a formal communications strategy (2006-2009) that sets out an external communications programme, following on from findings of a communications audit and survey with the new Residents' Panel and recent findings of the LGA and MORI's 'Reputation of Local Government' project and the principles contained within this strategy permeate through the Electoral Service.

**Objectives of the Elections/Electoral registration campaign**

- To encourage all people who are entitled to vote in the borough vote on 6th May 2010, either through postal voting or by visiting the polling station
- To create a sense of duty by the voters and engage the public in the democratic process
- To promote the elections as fair, well-run and secure
- To raise the profile of councillors and promote their role in the community

**Key messages**

- Voting gives you a voice locally

- There are two options for voting, either by post or by visiting your polling station
- There will be Borough elections on this date but with a Parliamentary looming this will need to be subject to the same process
- Voting in local elections is safe and secure

### Target audiences

All eligible residents, especially 18 - 35

### Target media

Newspapers  
 Council Communications e.g. Runnymede Voice  
 The internet  
 Radio

### Strategy

Each phase of the communications strategy will serve a specific purpose and deliver to key objectives.

#### Phase 1 - Pre-election

From now through to the close of polling at 10pm on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010 the PR campaign will focus on:

- Encouraging people to vote
- Encouraging people to become a councillor
- The importance of a robust but transparent process

Press releases and media work is vital in creating awareness of the elections and there are many opportunities as we go through the election process that can be maximised with support from the local media.

Press releases can be used to encourage stories in the local press, will also be used on the Council's website and where applicable local radio stations.

The relationship that we build up with the local media is essential as we will need their support in the run-up to, and during, the elections. Many ideas rely on the co-operation of the local press, from encouraging people to register through to candidate nomination and reassuring voters of the security of their vote.

Press release activity is listed below in accordance with the elections timetable.

Date	Message	Medium
	Election announced, don't forget to register for a postal vote with deadline 5PM Tuesday 26 April 2005  Polling stations and times open as background info.	Press release  Remind press re ticket allocation  (Results will be on Web site that night)
	Receipt of Writ – to be confirmed by Royal Mail	Photo call: Surrey Herald & Staines & Egham News
	Nominees announced  County Council Candidates and Agents provided PDF	Press release
	Your vote, your voice and return your card for postal voting  Deadline: 5PM Tuesday 26 April 2005	Press release
	Nominees announced  Parliamentary candidates and Agents  Provided by PDF	Press release

	Use your vote reminder See the results as they are announced on <a href="http://www.runnymede.gov.uk">www.runnymede.gov.uk</a>	Press release
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<b>January</b>	How to become a councillor Register for a postal vote General article on security issues surrounding an election Snap General Election
<b>February</b>	Issue the Voice
<b>March</b>	Publish notice of election Register for a postal vote Roles and responsibilities of becoming a councillor Purdah
<b>Early April</b>	Last chance to be nominated to stand in the elections Last chance to register for a postal vote Publish statement of nominated persons
<b>Mid April</b>	Countdown begins for the election Postal ballot papers issued Reminder to return ballot papers
<b>End April</b>	Last chance to register for a proxy vote Reminder to return postal vote Reminder to vote at polling station Fascinating facts and figures
<b>6th May</b>	Polling day

#### **Before the End May 2010**

To complete the distribution of all results to those parties detailed above

#### **Website**

The Council's website will be a useful tool to help in keeping local people up to date with election news and is a central resource for anyone interested in learning more about the process, registering for a vote or becoming a councillor.

The information can also be incorporated on the intranet to ensure all staff understand the process and are able to ask questions if asked.

#### **Runnymede Voice**

It is proposed that at least a whole page or even two is dedicated in Runnymede Voice to raise awareness of the Borough Ward elections and the General election particularly if the election is called with very short notice. This will help to promote the process, the safety and security of voting and where to go to for further information.

The Voice will be delivered to every household by the Council over a period of three weeks towards the end of February 2010 and will be the last edition before the election.

#### **Phase 2 – Election night**

On election night the communications officer or deputy will ensure that results are fed through to the media on request. They will ensure that journalists are kept to restricted areas only and are provided with any information they require without hindering the elections team. Information will be prepared in advance so that journalists receive:

- Details of the process (information about how the election is run)
- Information of last count (including previous turnouts)

- Names of nominated persons for each ward
- Details of venues, timings etc
- All statutory notices and appointments made

It will produce live web updates so that anyone interested in following the results can follow the action online this co-ordinated by IT staff n the night.

Information will also be prepared for all Council staff so they have an email containing the results waiting on their PCs when they arrive at work on Friday morning.

The member's services team will also arrange for corporate photographs to be taken of all the new members along with their starter packs so that publicity about new councillors and their ID badges can be prepared.

### **Phase 3 – Post-election**

There will be an immediate demand from journalists, staff and partner organisations for access to a list of councillors and their contact details. It is proposed that all parties are directed to the Council's web site for this information.

Runnymede Voice – it is proposed that a page is allocated for all new Cllrs, listed by ward, with a photograph, name, address and contact details. Once this has appeared in the Voice, additional copies will be made available for staff and details placed on the intranet and internet.

### **Budget**

This PR campaign should be delivered within existing corporate resources