

How the council is engaging and communicating with residents in Covid 19



Background

- Tower Hamlets Plan – sets out our ambition of working ‘together’ with the community and to have ‘active communities’
- Strategic Plan Outcome 8 and 9
 - People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community
 - People say we are open and transparent, putting residents at the heart of everything we do
- Corporate Communications Strategy 19/20 – 21/22
 - Expanding from broadcast to two way engagement
 - Telling our story
- Consultation and Engagement Handbook
- Financial context and impact of Covid on consultations
- Difference consultations makes to decision making
- Improving consultation standards - one approach



What makes good communications

Executive summary

This is a corporate strategy for the whole council. Every officer and member should read it and apply it to their work.

Communications is a centralised service and a key strategic function to advise, guide and amplify the work of services and the corporate work of the mayor and the council's cabinet.

On a basic level, by working in partnership with services, we can help to tell our story and improve the reputation of the council.

If involved at an early stage, communications can help services to achieve better outcomes, raise awareness and affect behaviour change for targeted audiences.

We can also help to identify, prevent and mitigate risks before they become a crisis.

There are three key ingredients to good communications – the right audience, excellent content and channels to put them on. If one of these is missing, communications will not be effective.



We also need to prioritise our work based on the best impact for the biggest target audience.

How we continue to improve these ingredients is outlined in this plan.

Evolution of communications

Last year, the theme of the communications strategy was telling our story. We have made a great start but there is much more to do as a council and as a place.

While that remains a key activity, we are also introducing a new theme this year – to move from broadcast communications to conversations and two-way engagement with residents and businesses.

They are likely to feel more engaged and have more trust in the council if they have the opportunity to talk to us, give their views and be listened to.

This is not a quick process. That is why this communications strategy looks over three years rather than one. It will still be refreshed every year.

These two themes become the objectives of this strategy:

- 1. To expand from broadcast communications to conversations and two-way engagement.**
- 2. To tell our story as a council and as a place – helping to improve our reputation.**

Everything we do will follow the Smarter Together principles of better **partnership** working and the use of **digital** technology to achieve better **outcomes** for the council.

We will use research and evidence to plan and evaluate our work.



Views of our comms

Since we rebuilt the Communications Service in 2017 we base everything on measurement.

- Council keep residents informed rating: 72%
- 92% adults in the borough have access to the internet (ARS 2018)
- Online audience: Was 22k in 2017. Now 150k+
- Staff: 71% well informed; 80% use TH Now; 79% use intranet
- Residents feel involved in decisions: 62% (Not just comms)



Channels (main ones)

Digital

- Granicus newsletters – 108,871 subscribers, 50,593 to council newsletter
- Social media – 46,224 followers
- Website
 - 850k to 900k visits per quarter
 - 56,784 registered form users
- Consultation Hub – 3,442 registered users, 32,960 visits in Q2
- Virtual events – Mayor’s Question Time
- Next Door – 40,000 users in Tower Hamlets

Hard copy/traditional

- Our East End
- Door drops
- Advertising – CIPs, billboards, banners, In Link, lamp posts, social media.....
- Media including Bengali media



Audiences - Granicus

Granicus is our segmented newsletter and stakeholder database.

People choose to subscribe. They will unsubscribe unless content is good and relevant.

By segmenting our audience we do other things with that audience such as cocreate or consult for a better borough

Pre-Covid subscribers (Q3 19/20) – 58k total, 27k corp resident

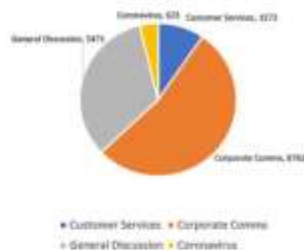
Active council newsletters in Granicus system	Subscriptions – end Q1	Subscriptions – end Q2	% increase over quarter	Newsletters sent during Q2
Arts and events highlights	4,810	5,315	10%	2
Arts news and information	1,553	1,605	3%	6
Ask the Mayor	189	360	90%	3
Bengali arts	117	113	-3%	11
Bengali newsletter	505	559	11%	11
Business and skills	3,420	3,902	14%	4
Children and education (includes stakeholders)	2,681	2,470	-8%	40
Community safety	817	919	12%	1
Covid-19 community champions	-	170	New in Q2	0
ESOL Hub	90	92	2%	3
Governance partners (stakeholder list)	228	223	-2%	8
Headteachers' bulletin	-	246	New to Granicus in Q2	5
Health and wellbeing - coronavirus (includes stakeholders)	2,466	2,543	3%	18
Idea Store	10,834	18,830	74%	1
Idea Store learners	2,168	2,158	0%	1
Internal: Children and Culture directorate	-	1,334	New in Q2	1
Liveable Streets - Barkantine	805	865	7%	0
Liveable Streets - Bethnal Green	1,074	1,146	7%	1
Liveable Streets - Bow	1,519	1,585	4%	3
Liveable Streets - Brick Lane	786	849	8%	1
Liveable Streets - Old Ford Road West	459	544	19%	2
Liveable Streets - Shadwell	603	700	16%	1
Liveable Streets - Wapping	1,184	1,239	5%	1
Local History	3,072	3,175	3%	2
Place partners (stakeholder list)	191	186	-3%	8
Planning applications and updates	895	972	9%	14
Residents' e-newsletter	45,803	50,593	10%	18
Severe weather updates	942	998	6%	1
Sport and physical activity	1,698	1,757	3%	0
Victoria Park	2,093	2,177	4%	1
Wapping bus gate	502	500	0%	1
Young WorkPath	675	746	11%	1
Total (engaged subscriptions)	92,179	108,871	18%	
Total unique engaged subscribers (individual residents/stakeholders)	69,290	75,104	8%	



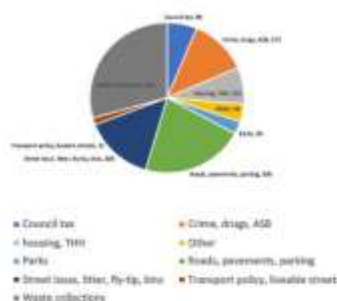
Audiences – Social Media

Key Indicator		Q1	Q2	% change
Facebook	Page followers	6,930	7,191	+ 3.7
	Total reach	895,573	837,277	- 2.1
	Total post engagements	54,456	32,894	- 54.3
	Paid post engagements	43,312	5,028	- 88.3
	Paid reach	68,800	573,498	+ 821.0
	Followers	23,428	24,325	+ 3.4
Twitter	Total impressions	5,405,888	2,347,638	- 56.7
	Total engagements	307,090	79,409	- 73.5
	Paid impressions	32,226	129,379	+ 302.7
	Paid engagements	387	12,25	+ 319.1
	Followers	4,090	4,457	+ 9.2
Instagram	Post impressions	45,137	20,477	- 41.4
	Post reach	40,481	34,836	- 38.6
	Story impressions	5,169	2,348	- 54.6
	Followers	2,192	822	- 62.5
Videos	Total Facebook video views	83,144	37,126	- 54.8
	Paid Facebook video views	42,103	24,370	- 37.6
	Total Twitter video views	38,378	35,313	- 98.9
	Paid Twitter video views	19,001	N/A	N/A
	LinkedIn video views	12,028	2,480	- 79.3
	YouTube views	58,700	48,795	- 17.7
Total video views across channels (paid and organic)		754,632	124,026	- 98.4
LinkedIn	Followers	9,617	10,341	
	Impressions	155,642	140,303	- 9.8
	Engagement	8,530	6,483	- 24.3
Total followers		44,955	46,224	+ 4.8

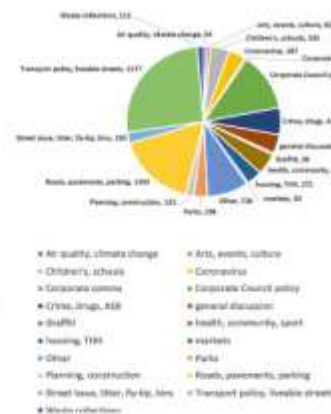
Overall



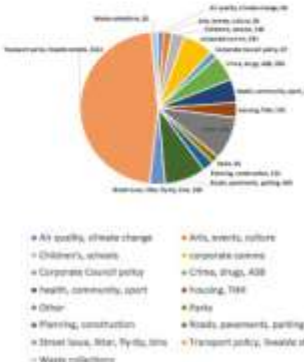
Customer service



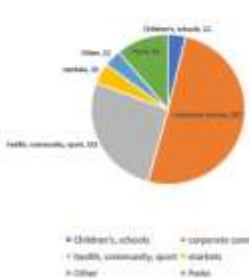
Corporate communications



General discussion



Coronavirus



	Q1	Q2	% Change
Total incoming messages	24,147	17,429	- 27.8
Total tagged messages	15,550	15,731	+ 1.0
Corporate communications	7,968	8,722	+ 9.4
Customer service	966	1,522	+ 57.5
General discussion	2,630	5,470	+ 107.9
Covid-19	5,543	623	- 88.7



Audience - Website

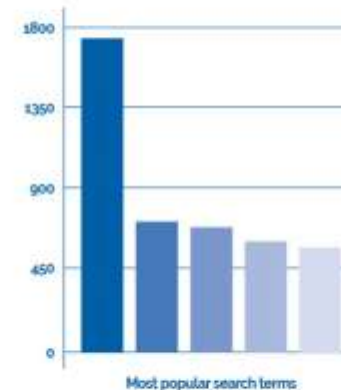
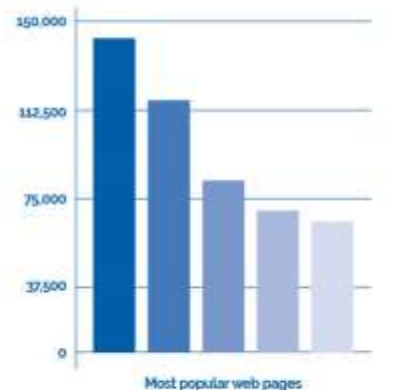
- 56,784 registered Firmstep form users

(Note: Firmstep bought by Granicus last year)

	July	August	September	Q2 total
Visits 2020	298,616	282,688	296,054	877,358
Visits 2019	244,555	240,413	269,414	754,382
Percentage change	18.4%	20.4%	7.5%	16.3%

Page readability	Pages	% of total	
Very easy (10-11 years old)	10	0.3%	21.0%
Easy to read (11-12 years old)	20	0.6%	
Fairly easy to read (12-13 years old)	94	2.7%	
Plain English (13-15 years old)	602	17.4%	73.9%
Fairly difficult (15-18 years old)	797	23.0%	
Difficult to read (18-19 years old)	1491	43.1%	
Very difficult to read (19 years old)	270	7.8%	
No readability score	163	4.7%	4.7%

Top five

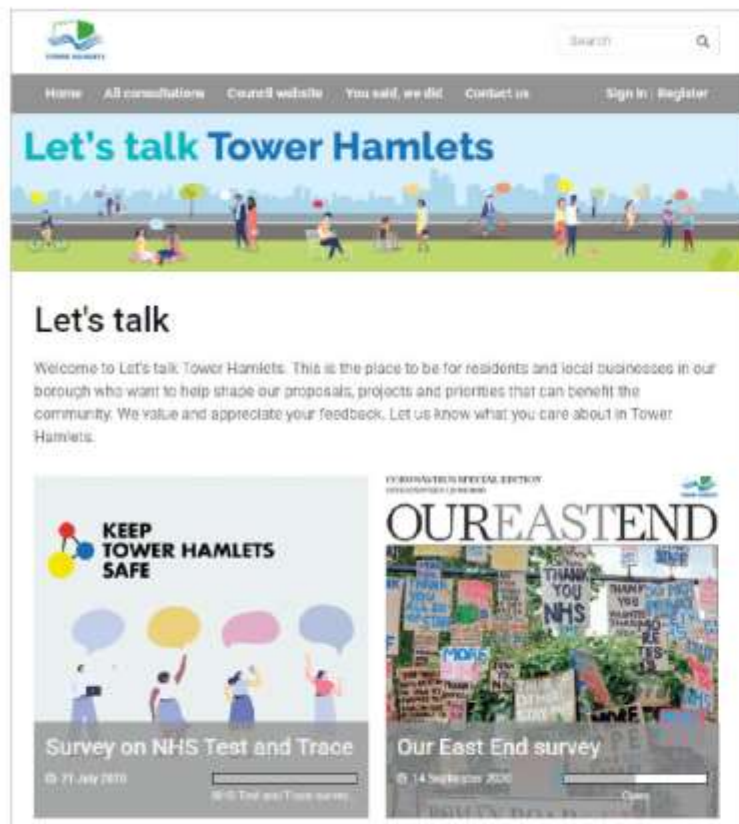


- Parking permits
- Resident parking permits
- Visitor parking vouchers
- Your council tax
- Manage your Council Tax

- Council tax
- Jobs
- Parking
- Planning
- Bulky waste



Audience – Consultation Hub



New projects in Q2, listed by date published:

- Liveable Streets Bow, 1 July
- Survey on NHS Test and Trace, 21 July
- Arnold Road, 11 August
- Liveable Streets Barkantine, 17 August
- East of the Borough and Lower Lea Valley Area Action Plan, 20 August
- Ask the Mayor event registration, 20 August
- South Dock Bridge - developed design stage, 24 August
- Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy, 24 August
- Central Area Good Growth - Supplementary Planning Document, 26 August
- Gill Street - new council homes, 26 August
- Edward Mann Close - new council homes, 27 August
- Selective Licensing Scheme consultation, 28 August
- Queen Mary University Mile End Campus - Supplementary Planning Document, 3 September
- Ask the Mayor event feedback, 3 September
- South Poplar Masterplan - Supplementary Planning Document, 8 September
- Walter Terrace - new council homes, 11 September
- Our East End survey, 14 September
- Smithy Street - new council homes, 23 September
- Tower Hamlets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission, 25 September
- Changes to the B1 and B2 parking zones, 30 September

Participation to date:

- 3,442 new site registrations
- 32,960 overall visits to the site, including:
 - 3,509 from engaged participants
 - 12,013 from informed participants
 - 22,486 from aware visitors

Top five most engaged with projects during Q2*:

- 1 Liveable Streets Bow – 2,614 engaged participants (17.7%)
- 2 Idea Store Learning - online courses – 202 engaged participants (29.6%)
- 3 Liveable Streets Bethnal Green – 168 engaged participants (10.3%)
- 4 Selective Licensing Scheme consultation – 165 engaged participants (14.6%)
- 5 Virtual Ask the Mayor – 160 engaged participants (27.4%)



Audiences - Internal

- Around 50% of our staff live in the borough

Internal communications highlights:

	April	August
Staff that feel well informed	80%	71%
Staff using the intranet as main channel to stay informed	80%	81%
Staff using th now as main channel to stay informed	79%	80%

Internal all staff newsletter

Key indicator	3 July	9 July	16 July	23 July	30 July	6 Aug	13 Aug	20 Aug	27 Aug	4 Sept	10 Sept	17 Sept	24 Sept
Open rate	43%	40%	39%	40%	39%	47%	47%	40%	44%	43%	44%	41%	43%
Top three most popular items	1 CE Message	CE Message	CE Message	CE Message	CE Message	CE Message	Neville Murton, on behalf of the CE	Denise Radley, on behalf of the CE	Ann Sutcliffe, on behalf of the CE	Our financial position	CE Message	CE Message	CE Message
	2 TOWER Rewards	Click and collect	TOWER Rewards	Phased reopening	Car parking changes	Industrial action	Face coverings	Employee spotlight	Team spotlight	CE Message	Covid-19 cases increase in TH	Team spotlight	Employee spotlight
	3 Return to work	TOWER Rewards	My annual review	IT Update	Focus on your wellbeing	Test and trace	Financial advice available for staff	Our new intranet: The Bridge	Individual risk assessments	Employee spotlight	Flujab	Corporate Mandatory Learning Programme	New national restrictions to stop Covid-19



Covid Communications - Digital

- **Newsletters:** Daily for many weeks, Bengali newsletter introduced, Members and MP Bulletins
- **Films:** Different languages with Covid advice, also #TowerHamletsTogether film with partners had 71,235 views
- **Whatsapp and social media messages:** For members and residents to share – translated into Bengali and Somali
- **Webpages**
 - Dedicated Covid section set up on our website for businesses, residents and partners
 - Hundreds of webpages changed to reflect service changes including setting up new pages and forms for residents and businesses to apply for support



Covid Communications - Traditional



- **Advertising:** Negotiated free advertising on digital screens, as well as using our own channels
- **Leaflet drops** – Two for all residents, targeted ones for residents and businesses in different languages, leaflets in food deliveries
- **Phone line:** To support vulnerable residents
- **OEE** – June Covid special; ongoing focus in Sep and due in Dec
- **Banners and posters** – In different languages targeted to certain areas. For example, Victoria Park and high streets
- **Communications Pandemic Group** – Housing providers, QMU, Barts, CCG, GP Group, CWG, Interfaith Forum, ELBA, colleges, Spotlight, THVCS – share messages to their audiences.



Progress in implementing new consultation hub and guidance



Consultation Hub

Progress

- Introduced in March 2020
- 39 Consultations or surveys
- 3,442 registrations
- 32,960 overall site visits
- 28 Superusers trained
- Interfaced with Granicus in October

Next:

- Continue to build audience and train officers on standards and hub use
- Create a Let's Talk Consultation Panel



Policy and Engagement

- Roll out of Engagement and Consultation Handbook - 3 staff training and 2 Members' briefing sessions
- Stakeholder mapping embedded in Guidance e.g. Community engagement forums
- Working with partners
- Test and Trace/Covid-19 engagement programme





TOWER HAMLETS

Areas of improvement and digitally excluded



Areas of Improvement / Digitally Excluded



- Reality: Our budgets are reducing
- Improvements: Continue to build our audiences. Focus on good content and measurement, connect existing platforms to new CRM system
- Improvements: Look for new ways to engage a new audience such as Next Door
- Digitally excluded
 - Networks – families, places of worship, schools, day centres, Idea Stores, communities, members
 - Partners – share content with partners who have better networks
 - Services – Targeted leaflets, door drops and face to face engagement by services including translated material
 - Other ideas – improve digital literacy

