

PR ACTIVITY UPDATE	21 February 2017
CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Creating a positive profile for the Council and the Borough
Lead Officer	Director of Performance
Cost: (If applicable)	

1.0 Background

The PR Manager, has been in post since August 22nd 2016, and the PR Officer, has been in post since September 26th 2016. Since then, a number of changes have been implemented which have greatly helped to raise the profile of the Council both locally and regionally.

1.1 Increased use of Council's social media platforms - Facebook and Twitter

The PR team has increased the use of social media, and our online following has grown significantly. Facebook and Twitter are now used on a daily basis to reflect and promote the work of the Council and the Mayor's role.

Social media is one of the most effective tools available for the sharing of information and promotion of Council business and it allows for efficient distribution of Council matters. As well as helping to raise awareness of Council work, social media also allows for increased engagement with citizens and visitors, and adds to our communication as a whole. Linking social media posts to the Council's corporate website also helps to drive traffic to the website.

1.2 A new approach to press releases

A review has been carried out on the timing of the publication of press releases on Council's website. Press releases are now published on the Council website on a daily basis – contributing to the flow of information and the engagement process. It means they can be featured online by print media and used on local radio on a daily basis. Releasing press releases daily allows Council to set its own agenda when it comes to awareness raising and promotion. They are also sent to all Council members, keeping them informed and up to date.

Press Releases are all analysed individually with a view to maximising coverage in an efficient way.

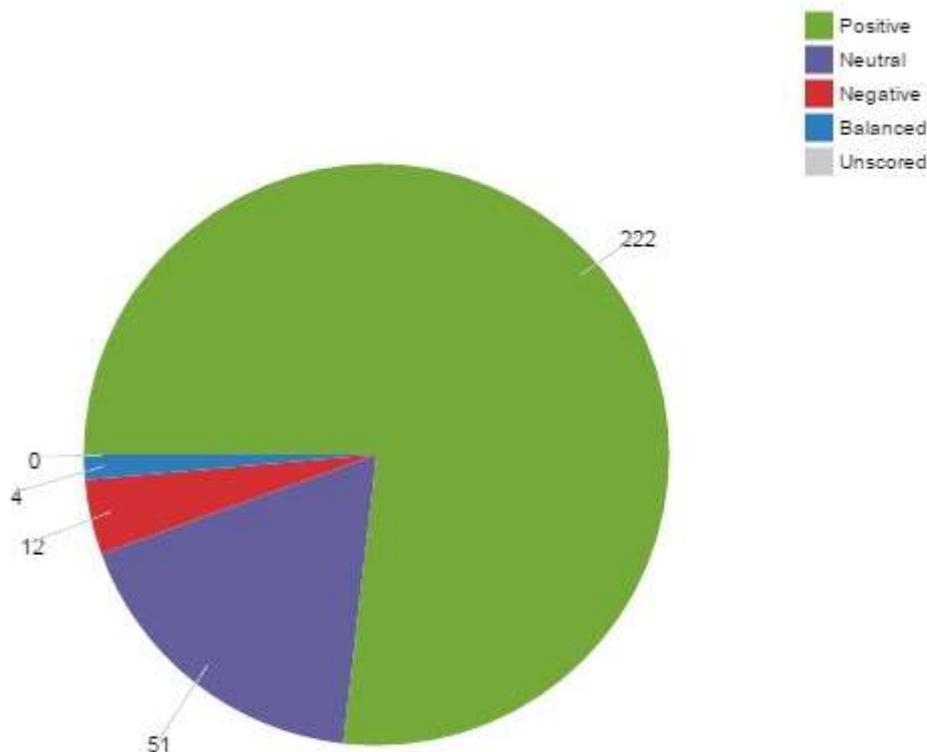
The PR team seek to identify all potential angles within a press release, in order to maximise its uptake. This has resulted in an increased usage of Council press releases regionally and in specialist publications. For example, press releases about Causeway Coast and Glens Restaurant Week were well used in Farming Life by focusing on the local produce and agri-industry angle.

1.3 Building and maintaining good working relationships

The PR team works effectively with the Mayor's Office and all other Council departments to ensure positive promotion and awareness raising across Council Departments.

Good working relationships also extend to the local press and beyond which has helped to build a positive media profile for the Council.

Media analysis for January 2017 shows that coverage has been largely positive.



Total number of stories referring to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council: 289

Total number of positive stories: 222

Total number of negative stories: 12

Total number of neutral stories: 51

Total number of balanced stories: 4

As a practical example of positive media coverage, the front page of the Ballymoney and Moyle Times, w/c February 6th featured a photograph from an exhibition launch at Ballymoney Museum along with a positive news story about the rates freeze.

1.4 Photo opportunities

Like press releases, all photo opportunities are analysed with a view to encouraging maximum exposure. As the media industry is constrained by strict deadlines, the PR team seeks to operate in a way which compliments this and ensures maximum exposure.

For example, a picture of the Mayor from Ballymoney Christmas lights switch-on was used in the Belfast Telegraph the following day, as we ensured the pictures were sent out as quickly as possible.

Another example of the importance of capitalising on photo opportunities comes from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Sports Awards as a picture of Michael Dunlop, winner of Sportsman of the Year, was used in the Road Racing Ireland magazine.

There are also times when photo calls provide opportunity for increased coverage and it is important that we are able to capitalise on this. For example, the PCSP recently held a series of wellbeing events aimed at older people. The local papers were provided with a large number of pictures and a press release, and this resulted in a number of full and double-page spreads in both The Times and The Chronicle.

1.5 Internal communications

The PR team is actively contributing to improved internal communications. A regular staff newsletter is collated and emailed to staff and Councillors. The newsletter generally contains information about staff achievements, training opportunities, health and safety issues, HR information and Information Governance. This is proving to be a worthwhile exercise, with positive feedback and contributions from departments across the entire Council.

1.6 External communications

The PR team is enhancing external communications by producing the Council's first Citizens Newsletter, which is in the final stages of production. This will be delivered to every household in the Borough.

1.7 Future opportunities

The PR team has been offered the opportunity of a regular free column with the Farming Life supplement of the Newsletter. This supplement is widely read throughout the farming and agriculture industry, and the column would have a significant advertising equivalent value. It is anticipated that the column would link in with Council's Tourism and Economic Development department. It would provide an invaluable PR opportunity, and would be a fantastic platform from which to showcase the Borough, and promote its growing local produce, artisan producers, food tourism and agri sectors.

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council accepts the opportunity to use the regular free column in the Farming Life, as it is an excellent opportunity to promote the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit, and provide practical support to local produce, artisan producers, food tourism and agri sectors.