

Communications to support people and places

- Re-imagining Communications to serve local community and business interests
- How can we build a sense of place identity through local authority communications?
 - Case study: Communications through a severe fire incident, what did we learn?

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Local Government

- Huge cuts in resource
- Changing models of finance
- Staff more weary of change
- Local government moving to facilitator and place shaping
- Still perceived (by journalists and public) as primarily about dogs mess, chewing gum and roundabouts
- The perfect storm

Marketing and Communications

**How do you
genuinely put the
needs of a city first?**

What have we been doing?

- Reorganising a central communications budget and staffing so we have capacity
- Set up a proactive message calendar based on the priorities of our partners
- Moved increasingly away from reactive to proactive communications
- Embarked on a city wide project to form a narrative and brand for the city – tied into a future vision until 2040

What have we been doing?

- Mantra of placed based communications means:
- Marketing and communications resource refocussed to support the city and its assets
- Exeter City Council should lead on communicating across Exeter – a chief cheerleader for the city
- In the process – redefining how people see ECC, our role and our worth

Place Based Marketing

- We are increasing our ability to speak to people directly
- Challenging perceptions of the council and our work
- Creating conversations – not one way dialogue
- Moderating and engaging with social media to create a safe space for people to express their views
- Becoming the go to place for engaging information about the city – delivered at a time and via a method of their choosing

What does that look like?

- Know your demographics and how your city wants to talk
- Communicate via a channel and time of their choosing ie Facebook council meetings
- Relentlessly build your own methods of communication
- Join a city wide network of communicators
- Set the pace for the collective narrative of the city, its history and future direction

On a day to day basis

- Spending time and resource celebrating success
- Setting the tone
- Talking up a city – not exaggerating
- Enabling community organisations to have a voice
- Leading the direction and offering support at both Exec and marketing levels of organisations
- Marketing and communicating place, making this truly about the region and less about the council

Sticky issues

- Traditional gatekeepers reluctant for change
- Staff and partners can be suspicious
- Negative news coverage will always work better than positive
- Potential for different priorities of partners ie: messages around student accommodation
- Still difficult to reach certain groups of people – passive watchers

Building a sense of identity

- Working with specialists to create a single minded narrative for Exeter
- Creating a sense of identity for a city that ‘hides its light under a bushel – then hides the bushel’
- Dozens of interviews and examination of priorities
- Creating a brand that residents identify with but businesses can use locally and globally
- Potential for the council to incorporate it – moving the dial in how the public perceive the council

Building a sense of identity

- Finalised this spring
- Network of marketing and communications colleagues vital
- Needs buy in at all levels across a city
- Will be the largest branding programme
- Key is that the city should own the brand – not seen as a council ‘thing’
- The power of a collective voice will open doors

Place communications in real-time crisis management

- City centre fire – potential shut down of large section of the city over 6 days.
- Incorporated the oldest hotel in the country
- Shut down the main high street
- Shut down water supplies to restaurants
- Issues included everything from international media to re-arranging a wedding, setting up a fire fund to supplying historian for the public interest





Exeter City Council with Jill Spicer.

October 29 at 11:46pm · 🌐

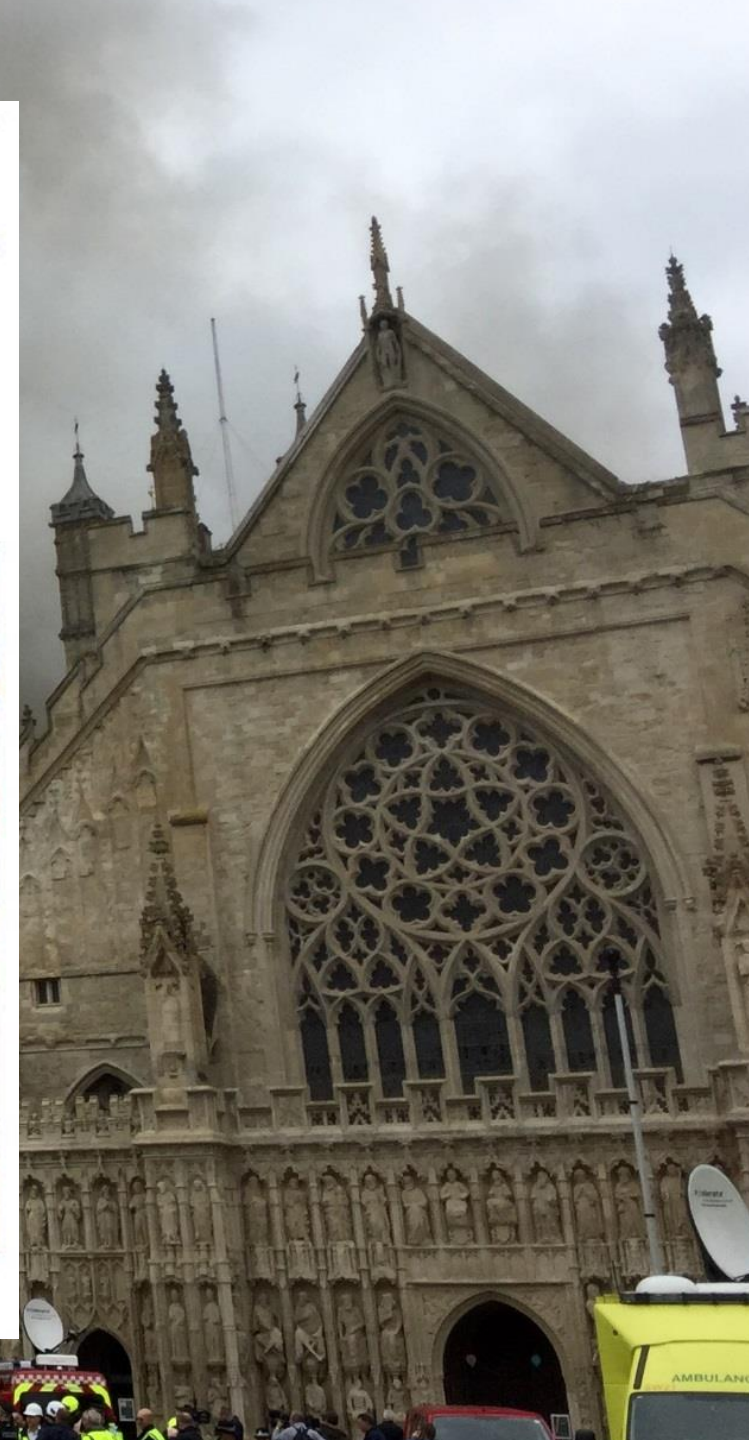
The last couple of days have been tough for us, the emergency services and residents. This photo has shown us the true resilience of the people of Exeter though. Nikki & Fraser's wedding went ahead in the middle of everything in the Exeter Guildhall. A truly remarkable wedding. We wish them both all the happiness in the world. ❤️. Thank you to photographer Amy Sampson for sharing the photo with us.
<https://www.facebook.com/AmySampsonPhotography/>



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Place communications in real-time crisis management

- Able to draw on resources of our partners
- We had built our channels and were able to communicate ourselves directly to people
- Created further safe environments to communicate – closed Facebook, phone, in person
- Clear communications from the start
- Over 1million views of our Facebook feed

Takeaways

Councils are beacons and guardians

**You are the first and last point of
call for so many**

Takeaways

Focussing your marketing and communications on others will help redefine what the public perceives about you.