



SUPPORTING OUR EMPLOYEES AND RESIDENTS THROUGH COVID-19

Internal Communications and Wellbeing

Recognising the importance of keeping employees informed and ensuring that they weren't overload with information, a daily employee email briefing was quickly established as a single point of news and updates. Managers of employees without PC access were asked to make sure the messages were cascaded to them so that no one was excluded or kept out of the loop.

Each briefing starts with a message from the Chief Executive, as well as including more fun and light-hearted features to boost morale such as things to do at home this weekend, virtual tours around the world, views from my working window, the sights of my daily walk and pet pictures, which have unsurprisingly been the most popular.

Shout outs and thank you messages have also been a regular feature of the bulletins, with some employees even writing and video recording poems (see [here](#) and [here](#)) as a way to express their thanks to their teams.

- “Over the past 2 weeks I have taken many calls from residents who are currently self-isolating, 99% of these calls have asked that I pass their thanks and thoughts to everyone involved in the running of the service from office to frontline and for continuing in these difficult times.”
- “On behalf of my household and also my business which is in Beeston, we would all like to pass on our thanks to everyone in the Council for your efforts in keeping all services running so smoothly during these extremely challenging times. Thank you!”
- “I want to thank the whole of Broxtowe Borough Council for the brilliant staff we have and for working through these difficult times, you are appreciated and what you do is valued.”

“Thanks for the Daily Briefings, as we are all separated from our work colleagues/ teams I think the regular email form yourselves is a fantastic idea and something I look forward to each day, I have travelled the world and seen so many fantastic things from my armchair thanks to you. Keep up this absolutely fantastic work.”

“I am very grateful for these briefings. They are not just rehashing the same old stuff but full of useful and varied content each day. I am finding them very helpful and wanted to say thank you to those people involved in them.”

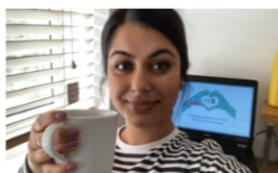
“During the restrictions and prolonged homeworking I have come to look forward to the staff briefing and this week the emails from HR. Both of these have helped me feel connected to colleagues as they include personal snippets of life and not just work updates. It really does help keep a little bit of the personal connection that the office/corridor chit chat used to provide.”

- *"It is a credit to you to have such helpful members on your team at such a difficult time when you must be so busy due to your increased workload. Thank you again and hope you all keep up the good work whilst staying safe during this difficult time."*

Staff wellbeing has been embedded into the briefings, with tips on physical or mental wellbeing incorporated into every briefing, alongside tips on working from home, using the new technology we have rolled out to enable video conferencing and instant messaging and first-hand accounts from employees of the role they are playing in the Council's response to the pandemic through a range of written and video content.

Starting during lockdown

Today we're hearing from Kiran, who started as the new HR Learning and Development Apprentice during the lockdown so has had a different first few weeks from what our new starters normally experience.



"Hi everyone! I'm Kiran and I'm the new HR Learning & Development Apprentice. I started working for Broxtowe Borough Council just over a month ago, and what a weird, yet wonderful month it has been! As you may have figured out, I began my new role during lockdown. When I got the job, the first thing I started thinking about was what I'd be wearing on my first day at the office – little did I know I'd be wearing joggers and a hoodie and sitting at a desk in my bedroom!

Given the current circumstances, I've really enjoyed my first month. My team (Aaron, Jean, Sally and Charlotte) have kept in contact with me daily. Even at the start when I didn't have a work laptop, they made sure to communicate with me and check that I was okay with everything. I used to work in retail and expected this new role to be completely different to what I was used to. Although I'd never imagined things to be the way they are, I'm grateful to have still been able to start my new job. I've been able to complete all the work set for me and have made sure to have regular tea breaks! It does feel slightly strange starting a new job in a completely different field of work whilst working from home, and I never thought I'd have to meet my team virtually, but it makes me all the more excited to see everyone once this is all over.

Stay safe and look after yourselves, Kiran ☺."

The briefings reduced to three times a week in mid-May before moving to once a week on 1st June but as a result of the positive comments together with feedback from a recent employee satisfaction survey, the Council's monthly employee newsletter is now being reformulated into a weekly employee briefing in the same style as the briefings which will continue beyond the pandemic.

A regular briefing has also been established for Elected Members, MPs, Town and Parish Councils and other key partners to ensure they are updated on the Council's response and have clear messages which they can share in their communities. This has been maintained as the pandemic has progressed, moving from daily down to bi-weekly to reflect the second phase of response the Council has entered.

Heads of Service and Senior Management are engaged in a weekly video calls to update each other on their aspects of the response, as well as to ensure they continue to stay connected and operating together as a leadership team.

A wellbeing survey has also been conducted with employees to gauge how well they are coping, as well as help identify the positive benefits they have taken from the experience and the challenges they are facing which need to be addressed in recovery plans.

Resident communication and wellbeing

Personal contact has been key to support some of the most vulnerable in the community. As part of the response, the Housing department used the data held within the housing management system to identify households who may require additional support. Over 600 calls were made to tenants living in general needs housing who were either over 70 or were known to require additional support. The purpose of these calls was to ensure that tenants were provided with advice and assistance. Independent Living Co-ordinators continued to have regular contact with over 1,400 tenants from Independent Living schemes via telephone.

Through these initial calls officers could identify who required additional support, and could signpost to other agencies or ensure that the tenant received regular calls from the department.

All face to face activities previously scheduled within supported housing schemes have stopped during the pandemic, however the Activities Co-ordinators have continued to support tenants. They contacted tenants who usually attended their activities or those who were referred by other Officers. They gave advice, support and company to them. A lot of the tenants they continued to work with live alone and have been self-isolating for a long time so are feeling the effects of the pandemic, emotionally and physically. The Activities Co-ordinators have shared information with them about at home exercises, online resources such as eBooks and at home activities ideas.

The approach was repeated to check in with vulnerable people in the wider community, with those registered on the Council's assisted bin collection list also contacted to ensure they were safe and well and to signpost them to any support should they need it.

More widely, the Council devised a programme of scheduled updates to help prevent information overload and ensure key messages reached residents and stakeholders which was supported by a set of comprehensive webpages at www.broxtowe.gov.uk/coronavirus as a central source of information including support for residents, support for businesses, bereavement support and a list of businesses who were operating to help residents get essential supplies.

The schedule included twice daily social media and website updates which were clearly dated and timed so it was immediately clear to residents that information was current, as well as three email bulletins a week focusing on all subscribers to the Council's email me service to provide essential Covid-19 advice and updates on Council services, as well as an email to tenants and one to businesses.

This schedule has been reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it adapted to the situation as it progressed.

Digital Stats – 1st March to 31st May

Council's website

- 61,108 page views – 11,512 more than the same period in 2019 (23% increase)

Coronavirus webpages

- 22,241 page views
- Accounted for 36% of all page views

Email Me Service

- 1,408 new subscribers – 642 in March alone
- Average monthly increase for the previous 12 month period was 167
- Engagement rates increased to 82.2% compared to an average of 73.5% for the previous 12 month period
- Click rates increased to an 7.1% compared to an average of 2.4% in the previous 12 month period.

Facebook

- 518 new likes compared to an average monthly increase of 54 in the previous 12 month period.

Twitter

- 77,700 twitter impressions, compared to a monthly average of 103,008 in the previous 12 month period.
- April marked the highest twitter impressions in the last 12 month period at 197,800
- 111 retweets

LinkedIn

6.2% engagement rate compared to 2.8% in the previous 12 month period.

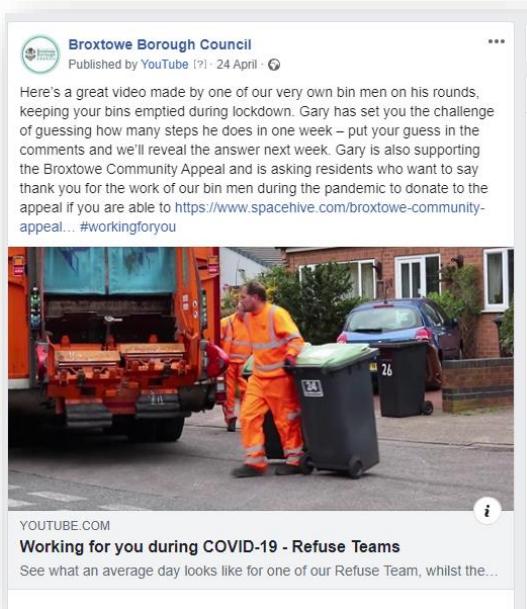
YouTube

- 30 new videos uploaded for internal and external audiences
- 3,053 video views

An infographic was created to help residents understand how the Council was responding to the pandemic and this was complimented by a series of employee videos and content as part of a #workingforyou campaign.

These videos highlighted the work of frontline employees like the Refuse Team, including a video [which was created by one of the refuse men whilst out on duty](#) and one [thanking residents for their support](#), as well as back office teams like [Revenues and Benefits](#) and the work they have done to deliver grants and reliefs to businesses and vulnerable residents facing financial hardship.





A COVID-19 special of the Council's residents newsletter was delivered to every home and business in the Borough, highlighting where support could be accessed, as well as providing community leadership and thanking residents for their support for the Council during the pandemic and for following the Government's stay home advice. This ensured that those who aren't online were still able to get vital information.

Direct engagement has also taken place with stakeholder groups to ensure they have the correct messages to share in their networks and that the Council can highlight the vital work they are doing in their communities.

This work has been directly linked to a community crowdfunding appeal which was established to raise funds for these groups to ensure they can continue to provide support to the most vulnerable.

A target of £10,000 was set and this was exceeded to reach a total of over £18,000, supplementing over £60,000 of funding the Council had immediately decided to grant to small mutual aid groups, food banks and voluntary groups supporting people in need in the community.

The local community got on board with the appeal with the newly elected Mayor taking an active role in promoting it, along with local people carrying out their own fundraising activities including one resident who completed a 75km run in their garden and adjacent cricket ground on the 75th anniversary of VE Day and a local Councillor and postman who completed his rounds dressed as a member of the Home Guard in the run up to VE Day.



Recognising the importance of VE Day to remember all those involved, as well as provide an opportunity to focus on something other than the pandemic, particularly for older residents who may have been isolated at home, Virtual VE Day celebrations were organised.

These included five things residents could do from home to celebrate from dressing their windows and a specially design children's activity pack, to leaving a message in an online book of thanks and taking part in the Nation's Toast along with other activities taking place nationally on the day.

Community Leaders also recorded [video messages](#) and a Council employee wrote and shared a [poem about hope](#), all of which were shared online.

VE Day Stats

- 387 views on YouTube
- 1,633 webpage views
- 36 thank you messages left in the online book of thanks
- 50 stories and pictures sent in from residents sent in for us to share
- 56617 reach / 64484 impressions Facebook
- 41 retweets and 46 likes on Twitter
- [View the Twitter moment](#)



Broxtowe Borough Council  @broxtowebc · May 8
Local resident Jan's dad was captured at St Valery en Caux June 1940 with the 51st Highlanders, and went via hospital (due to injuries sustained) to Stalag 383 and was repatriated on VE Day via Operation Exodus. #VEDay #Broxtowe75



Broxtowe Borough Council  @broxtowebc · May 8
Local resident Nancy - 'I joined the army I was posted to Stanford Le Hope in Essex, on a gun site. We were firing at the planes coming over on their way to London as part of the Blitz. My job was as a spotter, identifying the aircraft. #VEDay #Broxtowe75



Broxtowe Borough Council  @broxtowebc · May 8

Well done **#Broxtowe!** All of our residents have made a huge effort today whether that be handmade bunting, union jacks, poppies, lego lettering, baking, singing and loads more. Broxtowe has well and truly outdone itself with **#VEDay** decorations and celebrations. 🎉



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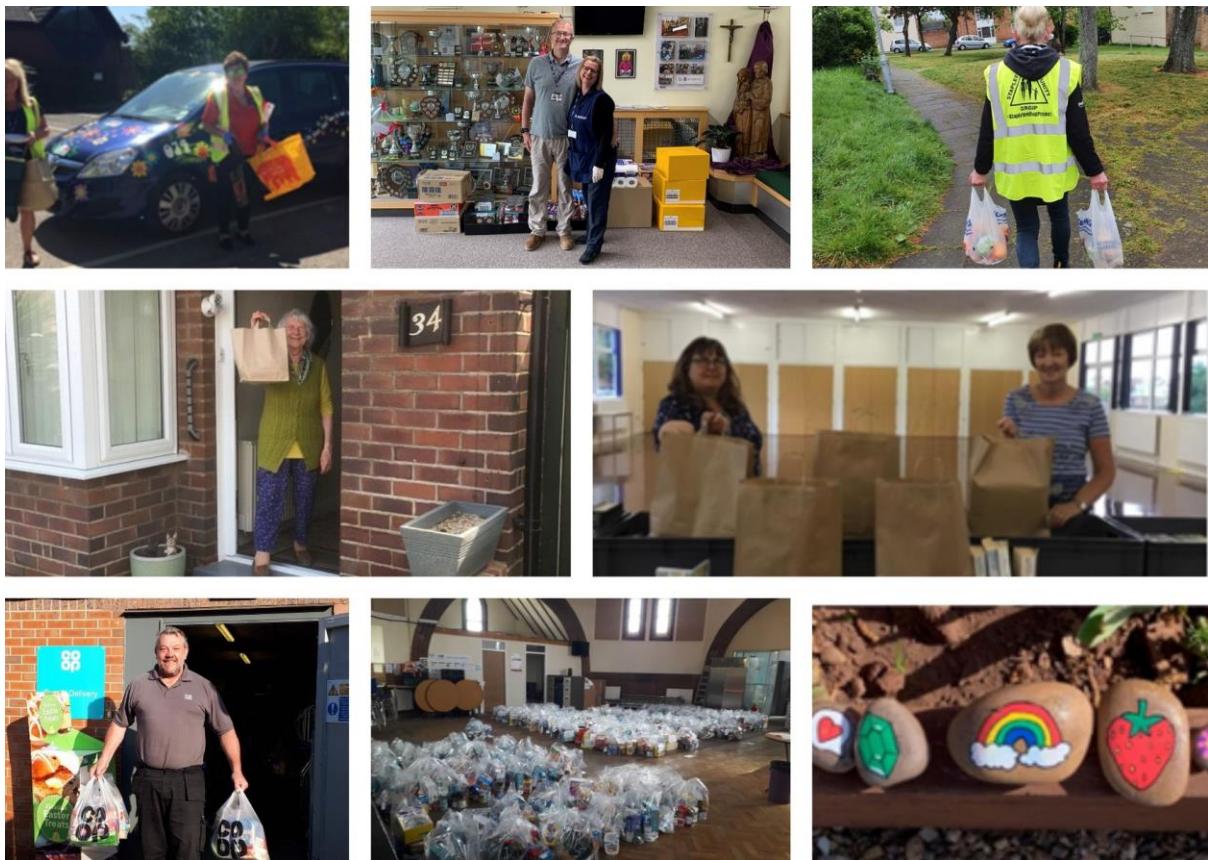
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The Council has regularly fed back to the local community through social media positive stories from the mutual aid and voluntary groups which have used the small grants given by the Council to support the local community in practical ways with deliveries of food, other essential supplies and telephone support.



Things we'll be taking forward in our communications

- More regular and informal communications with employees which has received better engagement with staff and encouraged more employee generated content.
- More praise “shout outs” and thanks for employees to keep morale high and help bring them together to work towards a shared goal.
- This has also been taken on board as part of the Council’s Senior Management Team meetings with more formal monthly presentations from the Chief Executive being replaced by bi-monthly more informal catch ups across the Senior Management Team (currently via video conference). This has enabled Senior Management to come together more effectively as a team to lead the organisation through the pandemic.
- More video.
- More direct engagement with the community to highlight their stories and experiences.