



South Holland District Council
Economic Development Communication
Audit & Plan



Opportunity Peterborough

Produced by Opportunity Peterborough. September 2018

Communication audit

A review of South Holland District Council's (SHDC) external business-to-business marketing communications has been conducted to better understand what enterprise support and inward investment focussed communications are being delivered in South Holland, and to evaluate their effectiveness.

While SHDC has some established marketing communications channels - with some proactive activity being delivered - the proposition portrayed to local businesses and prospective investors needs strengthening. This is a priority area to address which, through tighter content focus and development of key messaging, will bring a more coordinated approach to ensure the target audience understands: what business support is available in the local area, what South Holland's inward investment offer is and, importantly, why and how SHDC is championing business growth.

SHDC is currently utilising a handful of active external communications channels, including the economic development team's Twitter page, the SHDC LinkedIn page, the business information pages on the council website and the quarterly Business Breakfast events delivered by SHDC's economic development team. All are vital outlets of course, though a number of improvements are recommended to generate a more productive outcome with the target audience.

Each of SHDC's economic development communication activities will now be reviewed in turn, with recommendations for improvement suggested.

Website

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the South Holland District Council website. The header includes the council's logo and name, followed by a menu with options: Resident, Business, Visiting and Leisure, Your Council, Accessibility, and My Account. A search icon is also present. Below the header, the breadcrumb trail reads: South Holland District Council / Business / Business Support. The main heading is "Business Support". A sub-heading states: "This page provides information that will be of interest to both start-up and existing businesses as well as those wishing to relocate into the district". Three green buttons are displayed: "Grants4Growth", "The Local Economy", and "Business Opportunities". Below each button is a short text description of the respective service or topic.

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SHDC's corporate website is the gateway for local businesses to find out everything they need to run their business successfully in South Holland. It also serves a secondary purpose to promote the area as an attractive place to do business and encourage new investment to the district. From information about business rates, funding opportunities and a snapshot of the local economy, to help with finding new premises, the site acts as the go-to business hub for South Holland.

The website is hosted on an accessible content management system (CMS) which is managed by SHDC staff. It is mobile optimised so views well on both smart phone and tablet devices. It provides a useful bank of signposting support to help local businesses navigate their way towards the relevant expertise, whatever the nature of their enquiry.

Top level site analytics, taken from a date range of the end of May to end of August 2018, are as follows:

Number of visits to the business support pages:

- /BusinessSupport: 282 visits, approx. 90 a month
- /Grants4Growth: 84 visits, approx 26 a month.
- Grants4growth.sholland.gov.uk: 942 visits, approx. 300 a month
- /The-Local-Economy: 71 visits, approx. 21 a month
- /Business-Opportunities: 91 visits, approx. 28 a month

Where the visitors arrive from:

- 58.9% Organic Search
- 29.1% Direct
- 8.6% Referral
- 3.4% Social

The average time a visitor spends on the business support pages, is:

- /BusinessSupport: 22 seconds.
- /Grants4Growth: 57 seconds
- Grants4growth.sholland.gov.uk: 3min 47seconds
- /The-Local-Economy: 1min 15seconds
- /Business-Opportunities: 1min 13seconds

Where the site's visitors are based in the UK:

- Spalding – 25,056
- London – 20,360
- King's Lynn – 19,141
- Peterborough – 7,257
- Lincoln – 4,021
- Sleaford – 3,723
- Boston – 3,629
- Louth – 3,091
- Nottingham – 1,995
- Birmingham – 1,885

The top 10 international locations where visitors are based, are:

- US – 2,596
- India – 518
- France – 292
- Spain – 192
- Netherlands – 191
- Germany – 186
- Poland – 135
- Canada – 128
- Peru – 109
- Philippines – 73

Recommendations for improvement

SHDC's website is (and will continue to be) a fundamental component of the economic development team's communication programme. It's therefore crucial that it presents the right brand image, offers useful, up to date content and aids in data capture of business leads and enquiries.

There are two primary shortcomings with the website's design and customer journey.

The first is that the site doesn't capture any leads from its visitors. Where a call to action is made to 'contact us', visitors are then redirected to the Council's generic contact page where they must select the nature of their enquiry from a long list, none of which references business support or inward investment services. There are no phone numbers promoted so the user will likely end their journey at this point. On other pages, at best, the user is redirected to an external site or there are no calls to action at all.

Clearly this approach doesn't allow SHDC's economic development team to gather any leads for follow up, nor does it encourage visitors to return to the website in the future for further assistance.

It is therefore recommended that there be a clear call to action promoted on each of the business support pages which encourages the user to contact the economic development team. E.g. Contact us to find out how we can help move your business to South Holland (and include a direct email address and phone number for the ED team, not the council switchboard).

The second shortcoming of the website is its content and navigation structure. Currently it appears that the content has been presented based on what information SHDC wants to tell a visitor, rather than what a visitor wants to know about doing business in South Holland. The site's structure is very simple; there's actually very little information which gives the impression that there isn't much to shout about. There also are no images to help showcase the district's vibrant economy and visually sell the area for inward investment.

Positioning and content

It's recommended that the website's content be refreshed to better showcase South Holland as an attractive business destination and to position SHDC as the go-to place for business related matters in the area. A strong and unique positioning statement would help to clarify and reinforce the economic development offer to key external audience groups.

An injection of energy and a stronger sense of celebration for the local economy and its successful businesses would help to encourage visitors to read on, improving the site's dwell time and increasing page views, and most importantly, encourage them to make contact with SHDC's economic development team.

To achieve this, it is recommended that a micro site be developed which allows the business support offer and inward investment 'pitch' to be presented much more comprehensively and effectively. The site would appear as an arms-length website to that of the main SHDC site, with backlinks displayed on both. A microsite would enable a more professional, customer-orientated site to be created which has the two key audience groups at its core: local

businesses looking for support to grow their company and national (and international) organisations considering relocating to South Holland.

The microsite

The homepage would need to quickly capture the reader's attention and allow users to easily navigate to the content they're looking for. The whole site, but particularly the homepage, should feature bespoke, aspirational but authentic photography that reflects the local business environment. Images should include people working for local companies, rather than just external buildings or the area's key towns, to illustrate the commercial spirit and industries of South Holland.

The overarching content of the site should reflect the benefits for why businesses should be starting, growing or investing in the area, rather than just who they can talk to for help to do that. It's also important that the content is written from the user's perspective, rather than the partners that designed it, and it should adopt an accessible tone of voice with a simple, website friendly style.

The site should celebrate success to inspire other local companies to grow and encourage businesses to invest. A bank of case studies should be developed to tell the success stories of growing businesses in the area, with testimonials from senior figures telling of their positive experience of doing business in South Holland (ideally having engaged in some way with SHDC).

Budget permitting, short videos could be developed in the future to feature local business leaders explaining why being based in South Holland has been so good for their company's growth. Videos are a rich media and great, shareable content for social platforms which will help to boost brand awareness and engagement.

Finally, the latest economic intelligence for the area should be added to the site to celebrate recent success and provide useful insight to businesses to help with their decision making. A 'South Holland in numbers' digest would be a useful feature for site visitors and, as this needs frequent updating, it will help to encourage returning visitors.

Navigation and structure

At the moment there is no clear call to action throughout the site. Visitors should be offered the chance to leave their details on a contact form for a specific reason at every opportunity, or invited to get in touch with SHDC directly. This will help to create a pipeline of business enquiries that SHDC will 'own'.

Note: it's important that the promise communicated by the website's automated response after users submit an enquiry is matched and delivered by SHDC employees. For example, if the automated message states that the user will receive a reply within 24hours, then that should always be the case. (Every touch point of the customer journey should meet the user's expectations and contribute to the overall brand promise.)

The majority of the website's content currently focuses on providing a business support signposting service. This information could perhaps be condensed and, assuming the functionality is available within the CMS, displayed through a filter. This would provide a more tailored experience for visitors by presenting bespoke search results based on the

nature of the enquiry logged. SHDC could also then collect all search details creating a bank of intelligence and fuelling the enquiry pipeline.

A news page to promote good local success stories or SHDC business news should be created. Frequent, newsworthy business-related content should be posted here - this will help with SEO, as well as driving traffic to the site from referrers like Twitter and the corporate SHDC website.

Growth plans and strategic projects coming forward should feature prominently on a page of their own – the Food Enterprise Zone and numerous housing developments would be great to showcase here for example. This is really valuable content for both prospective investors and local businesses so should be celebrated and given a strong presence on the site.

A website footer containing SHDC's contact details, privacy policy, site map and e-newsletter sign-up form should be added. This will help both with SEO, site navigation and contact data collection.

Site map

A suggested site map for the new micro site is as follows:

Homepage

- Top level 'elevator pitch' with series of punchy key messages
- Showcase a handful of authentic, aspirational business-focused images
- Scrolling bar showing logos of key employers in the area
- Feature area to promote timely campaign content, e.g. business survey, upcoming events

About South Holland

- Location
- Economy
- Connectivity
- Talent & education
- Lifestyle

Key sectors

- E.g. Agri food
- Key sector 2
- Key sector 3
- Case studies showcasing local business success

Start a business

- Start-up advice
- Access to grants and funding
- Find premises

Grow your business

- Business growth advice
- Procurement opportunities
- Business rates
- Planning

Business support

- Recruitment
- Partners
- Business clubs

Invest in South Holland

- Area profile
- Investment opportunities
- Key developments
- Growth plans
- Business parks

About South Holland District Council

- Meet the Economic Development team
- South Holland District Council business services (environmental health, food safety etc.)

News

Events

Contact us

- Join our mailing list
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

Conclusion

By incorporating these recommendations, SHDC's economic development website will be a vastly improved experience for local businesses and prospective investors. Users will be inspired by the area's economic success and prospects, and motivated to find useful content to help their businesses grow in the area.

A number of quantitative metrics indicating website performance can be measured at regular intervals through the Council's analytics software e.g. number of new and returning visitors, average time spent on the site, popular content and key referral sites. These indicators will act as a benchmark to monitor progress as the improvements are rolled-out.

Twitter

The screenshot displays the Twitter profile for EconomicDevelopment (@shdcocdev). The profile header includes the council's logo and statistics: 1,886 tweets, 164 following, 648 followers, 127 likes, and 1 moment. The bio identifies the account as the Twitter page for the Economic Development Team in Spalding, Lincs. The main feed shows three tweets, including one from BusinessLincolnshire about energy and water supplies, and another from Moulton Bulb about onions and shallots. The right sidebar features 'Who to follow' and 'Trends for you' sections.

When used correctly, Twitter is an incredibly powerful and valuable communication tool. With only staff resource required as a minimum investment, it's also a very cost-effective medium.

SHDC's economic development Twitter account is managed solely by the ED team. It currently serves as a 'push' channel to share news about business support available in South Holland, upcoming events or local announcements from news outlets or local partners. The account has 648 followers (September 2018) from which there is currently little to no engagement.

Tweets from the account are mostly tactical in nature with many simply endorsements of views from other accounts (retweets).

Recommendations for improvement

In the first instance, it's essential to present the right image and tell Twitter who you are and why people should follow you. The biography of SHDC's economic development account is missing key information and needs updating to reflect the service delivered. The header image also needs adding – something that showcases the strength of the local economy would be good.

It's important to further increase the number of followers of the ED Twitter account - this will widen SHDC's reach. With a larger audience, the account can then begin to deepen the level of engagement with the people it's connected with and will help SHDC develop a more authoritative voice.

Followers can be gained simply by following other accounts where there is a common interest, local businesses or residents for example. Very often followed accounts will reciprocate. Simply search for Twitter users by location and browse the listed users' biographies. The other way to build a Twitter network organically (i.e. without paying) is to post interesting, valuable content to your audience. Blog posts, video, interesting statistics, images and business-related news are all good to share on Twitter.

Content should be posted regularly – daily is advisable, but only if offering value to the audience – and posts should be written in a way that invites a reaction from followers. Replies should always be sent to individuals that do engage to build relationships and so the open forum can see the response. Tagging local businesses or key stakeholders in posts to encourage a retweet is a useful way of reaching a wider audience and gaining new followers.

Where appropriate, posts should always aim to drive traffic to a corporate or campaign website - in SHDC's case, the (refreshed) microsite. This will enable users to then browse the rest of the site and, hopefully, responding to whatever call to action is posed – signing up to receive a newsletter or making a business support enquiry, for example.

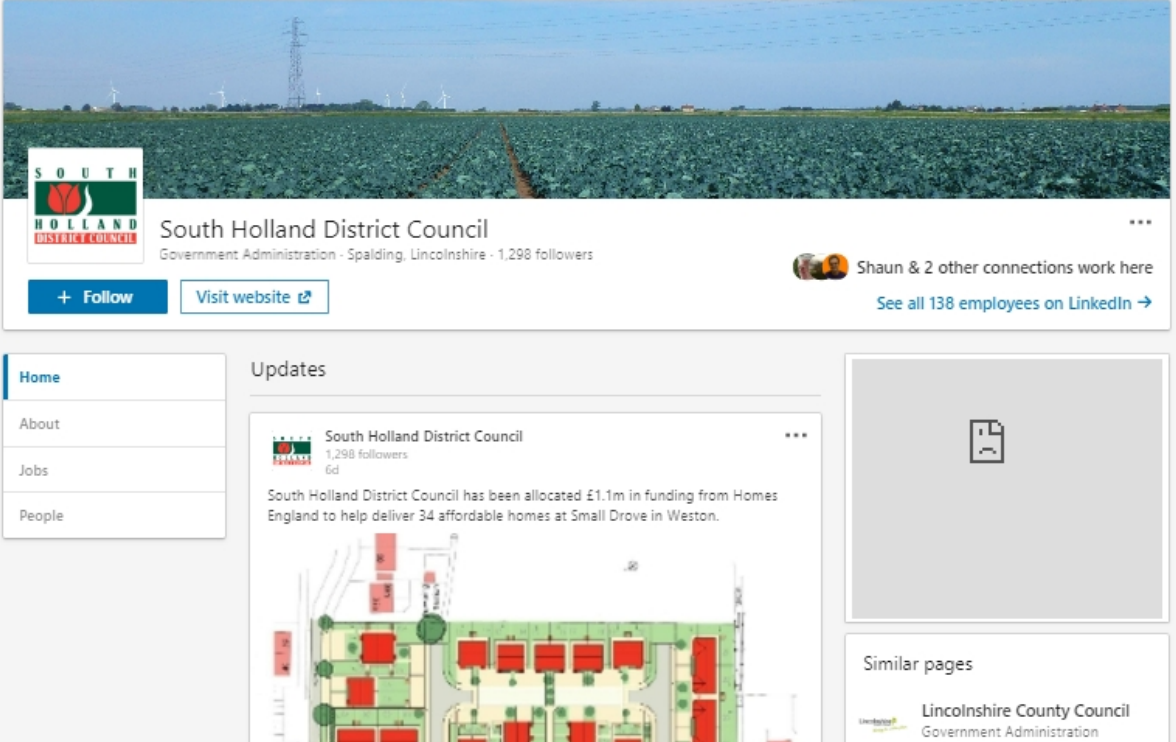
Hashtags are designed to group content into a common topic thread making it easier for interested parties to find. SHDC should utilise a relevant hashtag, #openforbusiness for example to be in line with the Council's 'open for business' agenda, and use it in corporate or strategic economic development posts to build a solid content stream about the core ED offer from SHDC.

Managing a busy and engaging social media account can mean a sizeable staff resource investment. Hootsuite is a useful social media tool to organise Twitter activity into streams of interest to the account holder to help monitor relevant conversations and news. It also enables tweets to be scheduled in advance for publishing at a later, peak time, for example early in the morning or during the weekend when owner-managed businesses are likely to be browsing Twitter feeds. This is a valuable free tool but do be careful not to schedule tweets too far in advance and then forget about them (in case the macro climate changes and it suddenly becomes inappropriate to post certain content). Also be prepared to respond promptly to any replies to scheduled tweets, even out of business hours if that's when the tweet was sent.

Conclusion

Twitter is a powerful communication channel that can bring great value to a business. SHDC is already active on the platform but there is an opportunity to widen both reach and engagement to generate best value from the staff time invested to run the account. With a few minor adjustments to the frequency and nature of posted content, SHDC's economic development Twitter page will become an invaluable communication asset to the Council.

LinkedIn



The image shows a screenshot of the LinkedIn profile for South Holland District Council. The profile banner features a landscape with a field and wind turbines. The profile name is "South Holland District Council" with the tagline "Government Administration - Spalding, Lincolnshire - 1,298 followers". There are buttons for "Follow" and "Visit website". A notification indicates "Shaun & 2 other connections work here" with a link to "See all 138 employees on LinkedIn". The "Updates" section shows a post from the council stating: "South Holland District Council has been allocated £1.1m in funding from Homes England to help deliver 34 affordable homes at Small Drove in Weston." Below the text is a site plan diagram. The left sidebar contains navigation links for Home, About, Jobs, and People. The right sidebar shows a "Similar pages" section with "Lincolnshire County Council" listed as a Government Administration with 5,001-10,000 employees.

Nigel Burch MIED • 1st
 Economic Development and Inward Investment Manager at South Holland District Council
 Deeping St Nicholas, Lincolnshire, United Kingdom

South Holland District Council
 Holbeach Agricultural College
 See contact info
 See connections (500+)

Message More...

Specialties: Partnership working, partnership facilitation, partnership building, networking. Building relationships with businesses. Managing ERDF projects Member of the Institute of Economic Development Prince2 advocate. Wash Fens LAG Member Lincolnshire Growth Hub Operational Board M...

Show more

LinkedIn is an incredibly powerful and valuable communication and B2B engagement tool. The most effective use of LinkedIn is through individual accounts, although corporate profiles support awareness. Unlike other social media, LinkedIn provides a professional platform so care and dedication is needed to ensure a steady stream of individualised content from staff that provides real insight.

SHDC currently has a corporate account for the Council which is managed solely by the Communications team and members of the ED do have individual accounts that are actively used with popular content. Nigel currently has over 1,500 followers which is very positive and is active in sharing relevant content either pertaining to South Holland, local businesses or key sectors.

Recommendations for improvement

LinkedIn is very much built around individuals establishing and / or capitalising on their credibility and expertise. As such, this is an extremely personalised media but offers more authenticity for those doing research.

This platform is already being used as another channel for circulating positive news and about the region's economy, and businesses, and as activity with SHDC's ED team begins, more content can be generated by the team. Current activity is very supportive of local organisations and the region, and is clearly an effective way to stay up to date with business news on top of local and sector news. By generating more content, SHDC's economic development team can improve understanding of its role, and the multifaceted support it can provide businesses and investors, which in turn should further enhance business engagement levels.

LinkedIn also provides a platform for digitally engaging with key contacts through groups and direct messages. By setting up a group the ED team can better share news, feedback and gauge interest and feedback on news and topical issues. To allay fears of spamming the group would need to be closed so that individuals would have to apply to become a member. This would allow the ED team to invite key contacts to the group and vet prospective members to avoid spamming and keep debates lively. As there is already a networking group for larger employers in South Holland, a group could be beneficial to share feedback from sessions and as another avenue to engage key contacts in debate and ensure they're aware of the ED team's work. With ambitions of setting up additional networking opportunities for smaller organisations a group for attendees could become a useful way of sharing information without mining for email addresses.

Content within groups should be published ideally once a week from among the group managers so that the group shows prominently in users' notifications, but these need to add value and staff should be responsive to comments and posts from customers.

The establishment of an inward investment brand will also need to be acknowledged on LinkedIn so a separate corporate profile should be set up, led by the ED team, although this shouldn't prevent the corporate SHDC account from sharing relevant investment news.

Hashtags can also be used to group content into a common topic thread. SHDC should utilise any relevant hashtags to reflect Twitter activity (and vice versa) and so that news is more likely to show in searches, such as #agritech #horticulture.

To reduce staff burden, group management on LinkedIn can normally be scheduled through paid for features within tools such as Hootsuite. This is useful for event notifications and general messaging such as case studies, but where there is particularly time sensitive or potentially interesting content, it is best for the person to post the content live and remain mindful of the post so they can achieve real-time engagement without leaving customers without a response. Although the ED team should not feel obliged to respond in detail to any interaction, they need to be steering the conversation, making constructive contributions and ensuring and queries or issues are answered quickly. As with Twitter, content should preferably not be scheduled too far in advance in case of changes in circumstance.

Conclusion

LinkedIn is a valuable tool for both businesses and individuals. SHDC is already active on the platform but there is an opportunity to significantly increase business engagement through the use of groups, and publication of more SHDC content. There will need to be discussions around how these groups function and segment customers if more than one is set up but this should provide a valuable resource for the ED team and businesses who will have another avenue of developing local professional relationships and showing support for the district's economic health.

Events

A quarterly Business Breakfast event is hosted by SHDC's economic development team. These well organised events attract between 20 – 30 local businesses and stakeholders and

receive good feedback. The events rotate around the district using various partner venues to host, such as Boston College's campus in Spalding for example.

The events are backed by SHDC's senior team, with both the CEO and ED portfolio holder attending and showing their commitment. They offer a range of interesting speakers and offer useful insight around key infrastructure projects. A valuable Q&A session and networking time adds to the interactive nature of the sessions which allows for rich qualitative feedback to be gathered from delegates while also encouraging businesses to make local connections.

There are also a number of business events delivered by local partners across the area, for example the regular networking sessions organised by the Chambers of Commerce, FSB and the annual South Holland Business Awards, though engagement at these events could be improved. While it would be easy to identify these events as being in competition with SHDC's Breakfast events, it's much better to consider them as complimentary to the Council's 'open for business' agenda.

The annual South Holland Business Awards are a positive celebration in the local business calendar organised by Lincolnshire Chambers of Commerce. With an improved brand presence following implementation of enhanced marketing communications, there could be a future opportunity to negotiate an associate sponsor position for the awards in return for SHDC's support to boost business entries and promote the evening ceremony as a good networking event. This would help to further increase brand awareness and affiliate SHDC with one of South Holland's most prestigious business events of the year (at no cost).

Recommendations for improvement

SHDC's economic development events fill a very important gap in the local market for creating a high quality business networking environment coupled with valuable speaker content. SHDC is well placed to deliver these events, which serves to reinforce the council's position as experts in all matters business and economy related.

While the event programme is still relatively new, it has been well received and offers great potential for widening its reach to local businesses. It is recommended that the format and style of these events remains the same, but focus is placed on promoting the sessions more widely across the district to attract a larger business audience and increase engagement. Utilising local media, SHDC's owned channels such as social platforms and its website, and of course, making the most of the economic development team's established connections will help to boost numbers.

As the events develop and mature, SHDC could consider inviting external speakers to present to offer a different perspective on business growth and inspire delegates with their experience. Themes could be planned to tie the events into the macro environment (e.g. Brexit) or to support the implementation of SHDC's economic development action plan (e.g. skills/apprenticeships).

Inviting time-poor businesses to commit to 'donate' several hours of their busy day to attend a council event is always going to be challenging. It's important, therefore, to offer layers of

interaction and snippets of content to build a relationship through various, less intrusive digital forms of communication, as well as offering a business-focussed content rich event that justifies the time investment for delegates to attend.

Success measures will vary depending on the objective of each event, but clearly the number of delegates attending, the range of business sectors represented, delegate feedback on the content delivered, value of the networking opportunity and the response to the call to action, will all feature as good indicators of achievement.

Conclusion

Events are highly valuable communication mediums. They offer a valuable opportunity to gain immediate qualitative feedback from local companies and enable interactive, positive engagement with a defined target audience to encourage lasting relationships to be developed.

As SHDC has already established a respected programme of regular events within the district, it should focus on developing this asset to foster a more productive environment for collaboration and procurement among local businesses, and to share expert insight on business topics that helps local companies to grow. The priority should really be on promoting the events more widely across the district to increase delegate numbers and broaden the reach to ensure a range of industries are represented.

Inward investment content

Aside from the 'Business Opportunities' page on the Council's website, SHDC doesn't currently have any inward investment focused marketing content. However, the district does feature on the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's website, with projects like Peppermint Park FEZ singled out.

Recommendations for improvement

In addition to the redeveloped microsite as outlined above, clearly some aspirational inward investment focused marketing collateral needs to be created to promote South Holland and position the district as ripe for investment.

It should be noted that SHDC has an ambition to create a higher skilled workforce. To achieve this, focus will need to be placed on attracting higher skilled companies to the area, or existing local companies will need to be developed further. SHDC's inward investment marketing material will need to reflect this objective in the offer to businesses, so R&D should be prioritised. Key focus should be placed on the development aspect of R&D, and so should feature local companies involved in development to illustrate the area's capability in this area to attract more organisations to the cluster.

Sector sheets

Inward investment focused fact sheets would certainly be a useful addition to SHDC's communications collateral. They could be printed for use in face-to-face meetings, pitch documents and handed out at events, but would also work well as a download document on the economic development team's new microsite.

While it's perhaps logical to have one fact sheet for each key industry, it is suggested to create just one single A4 double sided document instead. This will ensure the content is energised, pacy and, importantly, holistic of South Holland's assets and economic opportunities. It will also be much easier to use in practice, and will increase the chances of a prospective investor reading the full content rather than just skimming across multiple sheets for various sectors. The factsheet should be eye-catching in design, image-led with punchy 'elevator pitch' style copy and infographics to make key statistics interesting and digestible.

A factsheet designed for local companies which brings together all the main partners in the area offering business support could also be created, both to be used at local events to help organisations grow but also to send to investors to 'sell' SHDC's economic development service and showcase the level of support available across the district.

The call to action on these factsheets should be to contact SHDC's economic development team to find out more about moving a business to South Holland.

Powerpoint pitch

A powerpoint file to highlight South Holland's inward investment offer and detail the key industries and companies operating in the area should be created and sent to prospective investors and intermediaries, such as the Department for International and Trade, commercial property agents and the Greater Lincolnshire LEP.

The benefit of creating a powerpoint file is that the finished version can be saved as a pdf document and issued as an email-friendly, bite-size pitch that's visually pleasing and easy to digest. The file is then also readily available to be tailored for a specific sector or business, should it be needed for a face-to-face investor pitch.

Conclusion

South Holland's inward investment proposition needs improvement. Various key word searches on Google don't return favourable results, and even when visiting the Council's own website and searching specifically for inward investment content, very little is returned that would support a business in their decision making. As the internet is the go-to place for gathering baseline information, the district could be missing out on valuable business investment due to having such a low online profile. However, a really positive takeaway is that South Holland doesn't have a negative online profile and so by creating a new microsite and some additional inward investment focused content, the district could soon rise up the search results for business investment searches.

Communications plan

SHDC's ambition is: "To continue to increase the prosperity and wellbeing of our residents and businesses, whilst striving to protect and enhance the district's environment and its unique and historic character."

To support this vision, the Council's corporate priorities for 2015 – 2019 are:

- To develop safer, stronger, healthier and more independent communities while protecting the most vulnerable

- To have pride in South Holland by supporting the district and residents to develop and thrive
- To provide the right services, at the right time and in the right way
- To encourage the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth

This plan details how SHDC's economic development team's external communications should be delivered in order to reach targeted stakeholder groups through relevant channels and with key messages. It provides a detailed initial six-month programme that aims to lay strong foundations for future activity, with some suggestions of what that future activity might include.

The planned approach sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- To increase engagement among local businesses to boost economic growth
- To raise the profile of South Holland as an attractive, affordable place to do business and to encourage new investment to the area

Communications objectives

It's important that all external communications are designed to serve a specific purpose. Combined, activity should:

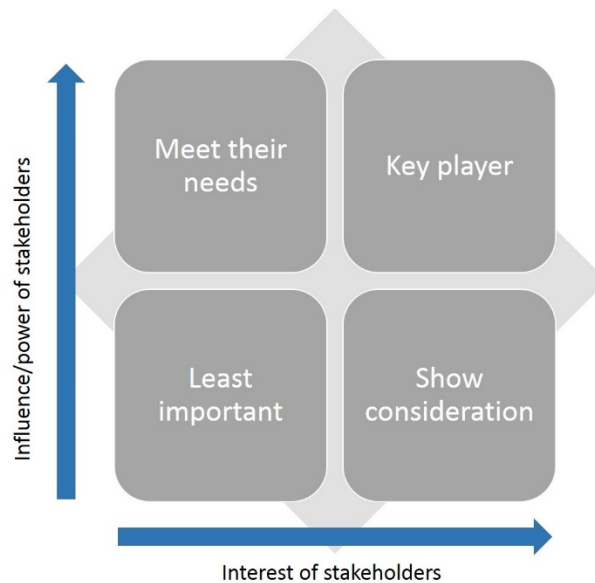
- Increase brand awareness for SHDC and position the ED team as an economic expert and first port of call for all business-related matters, and investment enquiries;
- Energise the local business community, improve the response rate and engagement of SHDC's business support communications

Communications should be planned, tailored and well designed to reach the target audience and be supportive of the above objectives. There is little value in using a 'scattergun' approach by sending lots of communications in the hope that some will stick.

The delivery plan below sets out performance metrics for each communication channel and these will be monitored closely at regular intervals.

Stakeholder analysis

In order to plan and deliver an effective communications programme to meet the above objectives, it is fundamental to better understand SHDC's stakeholder groups to prioritise communications to reach those with the highest influence or power.



Primary stakeholders (key players)

- Established local businesses (particularly micro level companies, given they form the majority of the local economy)

Secondary stakeholders (meet their needs/show consideration)

- Prospective investors from all sectors
- Aspiring entrepreneurs and new business start-ups
- Intermediary support partners such as banks, accountants and solicitors who provide support to local companies
- Internal stakeholders (SHDC business-facing colleagues, e.g. planning team, environmental health etc.).

Customer relationship management (CRM) database

An immediate priority is to develop a thorough and clean contact database of South Holland businesses with whom SHDC can start developing relationships. By collating and merging all owned business contact lists held by SHDC (across all departments), the ED team will be able to build a valuable picture of local business demographics and, through segmentation, be in a position to deliver more tailored communications that meet the needs of the target audience.

If SHDC doesn't already have a database platform to store and interrogate its customer data, then it is highly recommended that one is procured. This will ensure details are held in a safe and secure format and, importantly, will allow for updates to be made to reflect users' changing preferences and contact information so the data remains current and clean (in line with the new General Data Protection Regulations).

This database should become SHDC's sole CRM for collating and managing customer data, with all other outreach activity linking to or feeding back results regularly (e.g. internal stakeholders/colleagues, marketing communication email broadcasts, website data collection, SHDC/OP staff business engagement meetings etc.)

Messages and content

There's a distinct difference between what an organisation wants to communicate and what an audience needs and wants to know. Getting the balance right will be critical for SHDC to bolster its position as the area's leading economic voice and to draw its audience in for further engagement.

SHDC's economic development team should develop a content plan to schedule production and delivery of interesting, meaningful content that meets the needs of its audience and encourages a positive action. This plan will become an integral part of SHDC's communications programme and will help to ensure relevant, tailored content is being produced and its potential is maximised through various owned and earned channels.

An indicative content plan has been drafted below for an initial four-month projection. Activity has been scheduled to start in October to avoid the lull of the summer period and allow for communication preparations to begin.

| Content | Channels | Timing |
|---|---|---------------|
| Positive spin on results of annual business survey. Include infographic to help illustrate the data. | PR through local media, news post on SHDC website and ED Twitter feed, article in first newsletter issue | October 2018 |
| Promote sources of support for start-ups and aspiring entrepreneurs | E-newsletter, Twitter feed | October 2018 |
| Promote business membership organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and FSB and upcoming Breakfast events | E-newsletter, Twitter feed | October 2018 |
| Educate about the value of apprenticeships to businesses and young people | News post on SHDC website, e-newsletter, Twitter feed | November 2018 |
| Awareness of routes to finance available to South Holland businesses (promote Grants4Growth) | E-newsletter, Twitter feed | November 2018 |
| Awareness of scale-up opportunity and call for potential businesses to come forward for support | Twitter feed. Potential for PR through local media (depending on news hook and case study material) E-newsletter | November 2018 |
| Ten top tips for successful [digital marketing] N.B the theme of the workshop will be developed with SHDC following results of business survey. | Workshop delivered by local expert, e-newsletter, Twitter feed, website event and news post, PR through local media | December 2018 |
| 2018 in numbers - round up of the South Holland economy and a look ahead to 2019 | PR through local media, website news post, Twitter feed | December 2018 |

Several messages over time may be required to communicate a content theme and to meet the objectives of each audience. Responses will be monitored to analyse the impact of each communication to allow for necessary adjustments before the next piece is produced.

Content style

SHDC's economic development communications should be clear, open and informative. Using a professional yet friendly style, they should aim to appeal on a human-to-human level (rather than business-to-business) offering informative content designed to appeal to a human's professional emotions and buying behaviour. This will help to make SHDC's activity stand out from the noise of other B2B communications enabling more productive and deeper engagements to be formed.

N.B: SHDC's corporate communications team to advise of any content style guides.

A briefing note on the economy should be produced with some narrative to aid senior management during media interviews. Although statistics are important, there should be more focus on the overarching story and aims of the region that can be weaved into the interview so readers and / or listeners get consistent messages about the economy.

Visual identity

As a council delivered service, it is understandable that South Holland's inward investment and business engagement offer has historically adopted SHDC's corporate brand. However, to help South Holland as an area differentiate itself from the Council as an organisation, it is recommended that a new name and brand be created to encapsulate the area's inward investment offer and promote SHDC's economic development services.

While the economic development service itself is of course sound, it is the perception of it being associated with a bureaucracy-loaded council that can often deter businesses from engaging. By separating the economic development service from the rest of the council's resident-focused services through brand differentiation, local businesses and investors will see a more commercially astute organisation and feel more able to connect.

It is anticipated that this recommendation will perhaps cause much debate amongst Council Members, not least due to the notion of releasing control and losing immediate credit for delivering a council-owned service, however it is argued that in the longer term the Council will actually benefit more prominently from a more successful economic development service that has increased traction with local businesses and prospective investors.

As with any sub brand, of course, visual links back to the parent organisation can be made through subtle connections with colour palette, imagery and font etc. Therefore it is possible (and recommended) that any new economic development brand have visual affiliations with the SHDC brand, and importantly, the SHDC logo should always be displayed on all economic development content to demonstrate the family link.

When and how to communicate

The table below shows the proposed action plan for SHDC's economic development team to deliver an initial six-month communications programme.

| Target audience | Outcome | Message | Channel | Frequency | Delivery date | Measure/follow up | Resource |
|---|---|--|------------------------|-----------|--|--|--|
| Established local businesses, pre-start-ups, prospective investors, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. General public for awareness only. | Improved website visitor experience with increased site traffic. SHDC's economic development business offer is clearly communicated and target audience is engaged and inspired to take action. | <p>South Holland is a great place for growing companies to do business.</p> <p>South Holland is an exciting, aspirational area with bold growth plans for businesses, families and visitors to advantage from.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> | Micro website creation | 24/7 | <p>Refreshed content for current website by end of February 2019.</p> <p>Full site development, content and images by end of April 2019.</p> | Website analytics data to be reviewed on a monthly basis to monitor volume of site traffic, user demographics, content performance and behaviour trail etc. Based on current website traffic, a 30% increase in visitor numbers could be achieved. | <p>SHDC to produce refreshed copy and site structure, with input/steer from OP.</p> <p>Budget resource: Potentially some external web development cost required, depending on functionality of current CMS. Quotes needed for approval prior to any contractor appointment.</p> <p>Time: 26 content heavy pages identified in the audit (excluding case studies). Allow average of 3 hours for each including research, write up and final editing. One off copy writing total = 78 hrs</p> <p>Full site development – allow 3 months for adequate testing ahead of launch.</p> |

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| | | | | | | | External cost c£3,000 for custom microsite. |
| Established local businesses, intermediary support partners | Businesses feel inspired by the local area's progress and are more engaged in South Holland's future. Improved interaction between businesses and SHDC with promoted opportunities receiving high take-up. | South Holland is a great place for growing companies to do business. Celebrate local success and share upcoming events and opportunities to showcase the vibrancy of the business community. SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland. | Business e-newsletter | Bi-monthly initially, with the intention to become monthly in the future as news and success stories increase. | First issue to launch after brand launched. | Using free software (e.g. MailChimp) performance of each electronic newsletter can be monitored e.g. open-rates, clickthroughs, bounce rates and unsubscribes. | SHDC to produce and deliver, with OP guidance to set up initially. Budget resource: No capital investment, only SHDC staff time cost. OP time covered by contract. Initial set up in a mailing system: 7 hours (including review and editing final design) Allow 7 hours per edition for compiling stories, writing, editing, proofing and administration. One off total 7 hours Ongoing total 7 hours bi-monthly |
| Established local | Improved awareness of | South Holland is a great place for | Twitter feed | Daily – weekly | Already live. Increase | In-Twitter analytics to be reviewed | SHDC to manage account and respond |

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| businesses, pre-start-ups, prospective investors, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. General public. | SHDC brand, increased response rate to local events and business opportunities. | <p>growing companies to do business.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> <p>Celebrate local success and share upcoming business events and opportunities to showcase the vibrancy of the business community.</p> | | depending on content available | usage and content quality by October 2018. | monthly. Monitor to increase impressions, engagements and number of followers. | <p>to replies directly.</p> <p>Budget resource: No capital investment, only SHDC staff time cost.</p> <p>Maintenance of Twitter feed: Allow for 4 hours a week for scheduling posts, finding relevant content and monitoring interactions.</p> |
| Established local businesses, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. | Enhanced engagement with SHDC brand. Build-up of trust in a closed group. Encouraging collaboration with, and between, key local stakeholders. | <p>SHDC is the economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> <p>Celebrate local success, potential to discuss challenges and opportunities with peers, share upcoming business events and opportunities to</p> | Invite-only LinkedIn Group | Weekly – depending on content available. Members should be encouraged to share information and ideas, but SHDC should remain the authoritative | March 2019 | Number of group members, engagement with posts, number of posts and responses by members. | Allow 3 hours a week average of staff time across teams for planning, interaction and sharing relevant, unplanned content. |

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| | | showcase the vibrancy of the business community. | | voice. | | | |
| Established local businesses, pre-start-ups, prospective investors, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. General public. | Businesses have enhanced knowledge and wider networks to improve their performance and growth prospects. | <p>South Holland is a great place for growing companies to do business.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> | Networking events | Quarterly | Already live. Refresh content and speakers to appeal to wider audience by April 2019. | Volume of attendees, feedback survey responses, take-up of support programmes offered. Compare to 2018 event programme and delegate attendance. | <p>SHDC to coordinate programme and delivery of event, with OP support.</p> <p>Budget resource: Venue hire charge and refreshments (potentially to be cost neutral or even delivered at a small profit if a sponsor can be secured). SHDC staff time cost. OP time covered by contract.</p> <p>Ongoing total: Allow 21 hours per event – including all planning (5 hours), promotion (3 hours – if closed event), event management (10 hours) and follow up (3 hours).</p> |
| Established local businesses, intermediary support partners | Increased leads and healthy pipeline of business engagements and support requests | SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to | A5 leaflet to promote SHDC's ED services | One-off production | Finished printed leaflet available in February 2019 | Volume and quality of business support requests received by SHDC. Number of businesses that say they picked up a leaflet. | <p>SHDC to produce the leaflet with guidance from OP. SHDC to distribute printed copies locally.</p> <p>Budget resource:</p> |

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| | | South Holland. | | | | | <p>Utilise SHDC's internal designer. Approx print cost £80. OP time covered by contract.</p> <p>One off totals: Allow 3 hours for initial copy writing, editing and sign off Allow 4 hours for design including initial design and amends.</p> |
| Key large local businesses | <p>Businesses are better informed of significant local developments, more engaged with the South Holland economy so keen to reinvest locally.</p> <p>Tie in to closed networking events?</p> | <p>Large businesses are strategically important to South Holland's economy so SHDC is keen to support them to ensure their operations and future growth is optimised.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> | Strategic e-news briefing | Quarterly | January 2019 | <p>Using free software (e.g. MailChimp) performance of each electronic newsletter can be monitored e.g. open-rates, clickthroughs, bounce rates and unsubscribes.</p> | <p>SHDC to produce and distribute.</p> <p>Budget resource: No capital investment, only SHDC staff time cost.</p> <p>Ongoing total: 7 hours per edition for collection of stories, copy writing, editing and administration.</p> |
| 10 established local businesses (hosted by relevant SHDC | <p>Local business voices are heard. They increase interaction with SHDC and have the opportunity to help shape the</p> | <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> | Roundtable event | Quarterly | Early February 2019 | <p>Number of attendees. Level of engagement from delegates and qualitative feedback to the event.</p> | <p>OP and SHDC to deliver in partnership.</p> <p>Budget resource: Venue hire charge and refreshments (potentially to be cost</p> |

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| Cabinet Member) | future economic agenda of South Holland. | <p>South Holland is a great place for growing companies to do business.</p> <p>Share South Holland's latest strategic news, economic and regeneration plans</p> | | | | | <p>neutral or even delivered at a small profit if a sponsor can be secured). SHDC staff time cost. OP time covered by contract.</p> <p>Date selection with key SHDC team members and guests, venue research, management – 3 hours Agenda discussion and guest list - 5 hours (total across teams) invitation dispatch and Follow ups - 3 hours Actual event- 3 hours (minimum 2 members of staff in attendance) Set up and take down -2 hours Follow up and evaluation - 3 hours</p> <p>Ongoing total: 19 hours per quarter</p> |
| Prospective investors, established local businesses and pre-start-ups | South Holland is perceived as an attractive business destination ripe for investment. | <p>South Holland is a great place for growing companies to invest and thrive.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move</p> | Short case study films interviewing a handful of local companies operating successfully in the area | One-off production | <p>Production of longer video complete by end of June 2019. Potential to do one a month with case studies then condense into</p> | Uplift in website traffic to investment pages, increased investor enquiries and conversions and increased Twitter engagement. | <p>SHDC to deliver.</p> <p>Budget resource: Film production to be delivered internally. Alternatively, external agency could be used, in which case quotes to be sourced. SHDC staff time cost</p> |

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| | | your business to South Holland. | | | one slightly extended one to provide steady stream of content. | | for filming and editing. Per company: Allow 1 hour pre-filming discussion on questions and final product (across Comms and ED) 1 hour storyboarding Allow 4 hours per company – travel time, interviewing key personnel, and additional footage on site (minimum 4 external companies, for potential of longer 'feature' videos on them) Allow 7 hours for editing (including amends) Allow 7 hours getting additional footage from around South Holland (potential for footage to be used in multiple videos) One off total: 59 hours (13 hours per video (x4) + 7 hours SH regional footage collection) |
| Established local businesses, pre-start-ups, prospective | Businesses can access free knowledge to help boost their business | South Holland is a great place for new and growing companies to do | Blog posts and infographics | Monthly | March 2019 | Uplift in website traffic to blog posts, increased Twitter engagement, and uplift in businesses | SHDC to produce and deliver. Budget resource: |

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| investors, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. | performance. | business. SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland. | | | | accessing support from SHDC. | <p>Predominantly SHDC staff time cost. Internal designer to create infographics</p> <p>Allow 2 hours research / interview with relevant senior staff member who is the blog 'author'. Allow 4 hours for write up, review and final editing.</p> <p>Allow 4 hours for initial infographic design and 2 hours for amends.</p> <p>Ongoing total: 12 hours per month</p> |
| Established local businesses, intermediary support partners | SHDC presents a consistent image to external audience when meeting with local companies across the range of its business-facing services. SHDC gathers more rounded, deeper insights into local companies. | <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move your business to South Holland.</p> <p>SHDC makes it easy for businesses to operate in South Holland.</p> <p>South Holland is a great place for new and growing companies to do</p> | Launch a 'Business Ambassador' programme to connect all SHDC business-facing services | Ongoing | February - March 2019 ahead of public launch of new brand. | <p>SHDC to collect important business intelligence through all customer facing council departments, such as Planning and Environmental Health, for example. Officers will also act as an extension to the Economic Development (ED) team, providing a direct, face-to-face and two-way link with local businesses.</p> <p>SHDC gathers more</p> | <p>SHDC to develop the programme and roll out internally, OP to provide guidance.</p> <p>Budget resource: Predominantly SHDC staff time cost.</p> <p>Minimum communications contribution – 2 hours / month (incorporating updates into current internal comms channels, need regular feedback</p> |

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| | | business. | | | | rounded intelligence about businesses and presents a genuine joined up approach to external stakeholders. | from ED team) |
| Established local businesses, pre-start-ups, prospective investors, intermediary support partners and internal stakeholders. General public. | South Holland area is differentiated from the Council as an organisation and able to better compete for inward investment and local business growth and retention. | <p>South Holland is recognised for its inward investment offer and attracts investor interest and enquiries.</p> <p>South Holland is able to engage with more local companies.</p> <p>SHDC is recognised for delivering South Holland's economic development service.</p> | Rebrand SHDC's economic development service to appeal to a business audience | One-off project | April 2019 | <p>A professional, forward-looking brand is created to showcase South Holland and its vibrant business community.</p> <p>South Holland is widely respected as a quality business destination, both for expanding local companies and prospective investors.</p> <p>Increase in business enquiries received by SHDC's economic development team.</p> <p>SHDC's economic development team is regarded as the go-to place for all business-related matters in the area.</p> | <p>Depending on skill-set and capacity of internal designer, this could be delivered in house. If not, an external branding agency could be appointed. Quotes to be sourced as necessary.</p> <p>Allow 2 hours for group meeting for initial ideas and another 1 hour meeting to get buy in / feedback on final concept</p> <p>Allow: 7 hours design research 18 hours initial concepts (minimum 3 designs) 5 hours for amendments to initial concepts 4 hours for initial logo designs</p> |

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| | | | | | | | <p>2 hours for amends to final logo</p> <p>21 hours for application of final branding designs for communication channels and brand guidelines (e.g. newsletter, flyers, video, microsite)</p> <p>One off total: 57 hours design</p> <p>Allow 3 months for total project time to fit in alongside other work.</p> |
| Prospective investors | South Holland is perceived as an attractive business destination ripe for investment. | <p>South Holland is a great place for growing companies to do business.</p> <p>South Holland is an exciting, aspirational area with bold growth plans for businesses, families and visitors to advantage from.</p> <p>SHDC is the local economic expert and first port of call to help start, grow or move</p> | Create a new A4 double sided factsheet to promote South Holland to prospective investors | One-off production | Content by end Feb 2019. Branding once new brand established. | Increase in investor enquiries received. Uplift in website traffic on the page the factsheets are hosted. | <p>SHDC to create the content with guidance from OP.</p> <p>SHDC's internal designed to create artwork.</p> <p>4 hours research, consultation and initial write up</p> <p>1 hour edit following feedback</p> <p>5 hours design</p> <p>One off total: 11</p> |

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| | | your business to South Holland. | | | | | hours |
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Initial time guide for activities

Total time for one-off activities: 228 hours

Design

57 hours – branding

(additional staff time of 5 hours for approvals, 4 hours per month for project management [based on 3 months])

4 hours design – leaflet

5 hours design – factsheet

Total = 66 hours

Copywriting

78 hours- microsite content

3 hours – leaflet

5 hours - factsheet

Total = 86 hours

Videography

13 hours per video (x 4)

7 hours additional SH footage

Total= 59 hours

Microsite development

Allow 3 months for adequate testing ahead of launch if using external provider

Ongoing tasks – internal resource

7 hours bi-monthly – newsletter (3.5 per month)

4 hours per week – Twitter (16 per month)

3 hours per week – LinkedIn (12 per month)

21 hours per quarter – events (7 hours per month)

7 hours per quarter – strategic briefing (c2 hours per month)

19 hours per quarter – roundtables (c6 hours per month)

2 hours per month – business ambassadors

6 hours per month – blog posts

6 hours per month – infographics

2 hours per month – ongoing microsite maintenance

Total Hours allocated for ongoing tasks (monthly average): 62.5 hours

Reducing capital requirements

Identified resources

½ day a week – SHDC Comms team

1 day a week – OP

½ a day a week SHDC's ED team

Total of 14 hours a week / c56 hrs per month

The below outlines financial savings and potential streamlining of activities that could be made to achieve value for money whilst completing as many of the activities outlined in the Audit as possible. One off activities can be brought in-house to reduce financial costs and discussions have taken place to streamline activities to reduce workload whilst allowing for planning so that communications are effective and create the desired impact.

One off activities

Branding

Developing the ED brand in-house will ensure greater control and save time on getting an agency up-to-speed with the work of the ED team.

Whilst there would always have been an internal time requirement for project management, should a brand be decided on fairly quickly there is the opportunity to reduce the resource in terms of staff time required for this project.

57 hours – branding project

Allow 14 hours for initial designs

Allow 21 hours for concept design development and brand guidelines.

Additional SHDC internal staff time of 5 hours for approval at each stage and 4 hours per month for project management

Videography

SHDC's Marketing & Comms team has the skills in-house to produce quality videos. Having discussions and creating a storyboard for each video should also help reduce time required for gathering footage and support a highly efficient editing process.

13 hours per video, including planning (x 4)

7 hours additional SH footage

Total saving = 59 hours external

Microsite

To provide a more cost-efficient solution it has been proposed that the microsite be built in-house through online platforms rather than commissioning an external website developer.

The functionality required on the site is basic and many DIY solutions offer enough customisation to allow the ED brand to be used with great effect.

This will of course require a brand name so an appropriate domain can be purchased as soon as possible.

It is suggested SHDC begins with basic DIY packages and upgrades if necessary to limit expenditure. All the below sites include SSL certification as standard.

| | Go Daddy | Wix | Squarespace | Wordpress |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| General comment | More customisable | Less customisation but good basic functionality | More suited for creative and retail industries | Very widely used. Lots of plugins available to enhance functionality |
| Website | £6.99 / month | £8.50 / month | £15 / month billed annually or £21 month-to-month | £7 / month for premium £20 / month for business |
| Hosting | £5.99 / month (sale @£2.99) | Included | Included | Up to 13 GB storage |
| Domain name | £20 / year (cost dependant on name) | Separate purchase. Budget £20 / year | Included free for annual sign-up (if available) | Custom domain purchase still required. Budget £20 / year |
| Support available | 24/7 online only 100GB storage | 24/7 online only for this package 10 GB storage | 24/7 online support | Up to 13 GB storage Email & live chat support on premium Business package - Google Analytics with unlimited storage space and personalized help |
| Total | £15 / month | £10.20 / month | £16.70 / month | £8.70 / month |

It is estimated that the site build, without including copy editing should take 3 days including 1 day for edits to navigation, design and layout, although some features may be limited by the microsite provider.

Microsite Content

To align content creation with internal capacity it is proposed that content is prioritised by section. Whilst the microsite is being created some refreshed content could be shared on the SHDC website to make full use of the new material:

1. About South Holland – adapt current content
2. Business Support – adapt current content
3. About South Holland District Council – adapt current content
4. Key sectors – adapt and add to current content
5. Invest in South Holland
6. Grow your business
7. Case studies of businesses and support provided by ED team – ongoing
8. Grow your business
9. Start a business

Professional photography should also be collated depicting the district and, where possible, showing activity from key industries and employers. Such images can be taken from existing image libraries and business contacts where there is a strong relationship, although there should be clear guidance provided on appropriate usage and acknowledgements. There should be a strong bank of images ready for the microsite's launch which should grow as investment opportunities arise, case studies are collected and business relationships are nurtured. To reduce costs, agents and companies could be approached in the first instance to either provide a selection of images or enquire whether SHDC ED could take photos of their operations – with prior agreement. With photography playing such a crucial role in branding and digital communications it is advised that professional photography is commissioned where possible.

Staff time should be allocated to ongoing maintenance of the microsite. Content can easily be updated in tandem with other activities but it is vital that any bugs or plug-in updates are resolved in a timely manner to ensure customers have positive experiences on the microsite. Such work may not be needed every month, but by maintaining modern and responsive functionality, the SHDC ED team could gain better lead generation and customer engagement.

Factsheet and flyer (Saving 2hours copy writing, 4 hours design)

It is proposed that the factsheet and flyer are merged into one document so that prospective customers can download information about both South Holland and the ED team's services rather than having these as separate items. Should the team choose to enhance the physical presence of the ED brand at events, in business centres, for meetings, etc this could be printed, although emphasis is placed on direct contact and making use of digital channels.

To reduce time on copy writing, content can be condensed from the microsite and infographics can be incorporated to create a more appealing look. These can also be updated on an annual basis and with minimal cost as new print runs will not be needed. This should put minimal additional requirements on internal design as infographics are amongst the activities within the audit so this should be a case of importing the latest designs.

Ongoing Activities

Bi-monthly – newsletter (3 ½ hours / month reduced to 2)

Rather than a full newsletter, the team could send regular bulletins to subscribers with one-off pieces of relevant news. It is suggested that this would be branded as SHDC for business until the ED brand is finalised so the subscription list can be grown as soon as possible by using the content plan. This should only include the title of the news item, a brief paragraph summary and a link to the main article on the SHDC website, or microsite once completed, although cross-promotional opportunities for activities such as surveys and upcoming (open) events could also be incorporated to get best value. As customary with newsletter styles there should be links to the ED social media channels, and once the ED brand is set up, it will be important to make a clear reference to SHDC as the owner of the brand.

Once a content plan is finalised the bulletins can be actioned so the team can build up an audience ahead of the microsite and ED brand launch.

By doing short, snappy bulletins the team can present stakeholders with timely and brief updates on economic activity within SHDC.

This is anticipated to save around 1 ½ hours a month. The remaining 2 hours should be sufficient for cleansing data and compiling bulletins. This should also allow for greater frequency, ideally with one bulletin a month. Any additional time can be used to identify future content for use across all channels, commentary opportunities (e.g. end of year performance, new investment, housing developments) and dedicated promotional work of the bulletins to increase subscriptions through other channels. Subscription can be self-service rather than requiring the physical intervention of internal staff through tools on newsletter mailing systems. As the mailing list will be started from scratch SHDC should be able to procure a system free of charge.

Social media – Twitter (12 per month) LinkedIn (16 per month)

To make the most of this channel is advised that as a bare minimum 2hrs a week is dedicated to writing and scheduling posts and discussions, ensuring as many ED activities are given adequate exposure as possible alongside planned activity such as case studies and events. Although there may be some crossover in content Twitter and LinkedIn should be used in slightly different ways – Twitter for quick, snappy updates and calls to actions, whilst LinkedIn provides more meaningful opportunity for professional discussion.

Ahead of the LinkedIn group being established it is advised that the time allocated to social media is used to create a content plan to ensure planned engagement activities are given exposure and actions are clear across the team.

As this activity progresses, more time will be needed to manage engagement with posts, so although the anticipated resource may not be used immediately it is important to allocate sufficient time in advance. This also emphasises the need to spread responsibility for this

channel across teams so that cover is always available in the case of absences and to provide flexibility around time sensitive periods for different teams.

As an integral part of reputational management it is proposed that the bulk of this should sit with the SHDC / ED core activity.

Events (7 hours per month)

Setting up new events can be very time intensive and will require significant resource, particularly around promotion, although time dedicated to other channels, particularly social media and newsletters should support this.

As such this should form part of gold package for bi-monthly, or quarterly for a silver package. These events will provide an additional avenue into more local businesses to support the wider economy, but as a series of events is already being organised that targets SHDC's primary target audience of large employers, this activity can be put into higher value packages. By building on the newsletter subscriptions and social media activity, SHDC can increase engagement and gauge challenges and opportunities that will make for useful themes for events and blog posts.

Ahead of the new events being established, any allocated resource could be used to plan content and also gauge mileage in discussions at existing events organised by the ED team around topics such as infrastructure and skills development. This could provide another source of regular content and improve broader perceptions and understanding of the ED function at SHDC. This will also help with positioning of the ED team as the 'go-to' experts on the local economy and the challenges and opportunities being faced by local companies.

Strategic briefing (c2 hours per month / 7 hours per quarter. If merged with events already organised by ED team reduce to 1 hour / month)

Depending on the audience fit, the strategic briefing could be tied in with the breakfast events already organised by the SHDC ED team. Provided the strategic fit of potential subscribers this could reduce the dedicated staff resource required to produce the briefing as a separate activity as well as administration around contact management / subscription administration.

Roundtables (c6 hours per month)

This will be a chunk of time required for supporting this activity, including event management, and capturing and effectively communicating any relevant outcomes to participants, and where relevant, externally to the wider business community. Given the more intimate nature of this activity time should be dedicated to planning communications in advance, as well as how outcomes of the event and follow up will be collated. Time should also be used to explore how relevant themes or messages can be fed in to the broader content plan, such as event themes, blog and social media discussions, business ambassadors, and strategic briefings.

Business ambassadors (2 hours per month)

This is an extremely necessary and worthwhile programme to enhance SHDC's engagement with local businesses.

While this may be more labour intensive in earlier phases, resource dedicated to Business Ambassadors should reduce as teams across SHDC grow more comfortable with their role as an Ambassador. As an internal project, OP can provide some guidance but this should be driven by SHDC teams.

Blog posts - 6 hours per month (reduce to 3 per month if bi-monthly)

To start off with it would be proposed that the blogs were done on a bi-monthly basis to help give enough breathing space between posts and other activity. This will also reduce the number of staff resource required. ED themes can also be tied in to planned communications activities, such as articles from the Cllr Nick Worth for the local press and new investment projects.

The team should be responsive to any breaking or serious business news that could impact South Holland but blog posts could perhaps be used to fill any times when a dip in activity is anticipated or there is significant news (e.g. government budget, industrial strategy announcements).

Infographics (6 hours per month, 3 if bi-monthly)

Imagery is increasingly being used to communicate. As previously outlined, infographics can contribute to factsheets, the microsite and social media content so they are an extremely useful tool. They work particularly well on digital channels which are very cost effective, and there is potential to add basic animations that can enhance engagement.

Conclusion

Ongoing tasks can now be incorporated into current staff resource. If blog posts and infographics are reduced to bi-monthly rather than monthly this should leave capacity to produce videos roughly once a quarter. It is proposed that a short meeting is scheduled each month between Marketing, Economic Development and OP Marketing during the first few months the activity plan is enacted to support collaboration, ensure information is shared across teams and to provide adequate cover if needed. Although roles will be defined below, this should help overcome any challenges in terms of staffing changes, absences, and general communications around ED activity.

Time allocations below are provisional and indicate the staff resource required, although many tasks will require resource in clusters rather than spread equally over each working week.

Ongoing tasks – revised resource requirement

Newsletter bulletins - 3 hours

Social media - 28 hours

Additional events - 7 hours

Strategic briefing - 1 hour if merged with existing breakfasts

Roundtables – 6 hours

Business Ambassadors – 2 hours

Blog posts – 3 hours
 Infographics – 3 hours
 Microsite maintenance – 2 hours
 Video – 4 hours

Revised internal resource required for ongoing activity per month - 59

Lead denotes overall responsibility for execution

| | | Total time allocated (hrs) | OP (4 days a month / 30 hrs) | SHDC ED team (2 days a month / 14 hrs) | SHDC Comms team (2 days a month / 14 hrs) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| One-off activities | | (anticipated combined total) | | | |
| ED brand | | 57 | | | Lead |
| Microsite content writing | | 78 | Lead | | |
| Microsite development | | 35 | Lead | | |
| Video about SH | | 20 | | | Lead |
| Photography (admin / execution) | | 5 | Lead | | |
| Flyer / Factsheet | | 9 | Lead | | |
| Total | | 204 | | | |
| Ongoing | Frequency | (hrs / month) | | | |
| Newsletter / bulletins | Responsive to news and content plan | 3 | 3 | | |
| Twitter | Daily | 12 | 5 | 5 (lead) | 2 |
| Linkedin | Daily | 16 | 6 (lead) | 5 | 5 |
| Networking events | Quarterly | 7 | 5 (lead) | 2 | |
| Strategic briefing | Quarterly | 1 | | 1 (lead) | |
| Roundtables | Quarterly | 6 | 5 (lead) | 1 | |
| Business Ambassadors | Ongoing | 2 | | 2 (lead) | |
| Blog posts | Bi-monthly | 3 | 3 (lead) | | |
| Infographics | Bi-monthly | 3 | | | 3 (lead) |
| Microsite maintenance | Ongoing / responsive | 2 | 2 (lead) | | |
| Case study collection (video) | Quarterly | 4 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 3 Lead |
| Totals | | 59 | 29.5 | 16.5 | 13 |

By making savings on areas such as the microsite and video content it is hoped that capital can be put towards covering the following ongoing costs:

Microsite hosting - £10 / month

Additional events – budget £200 per event for refreshments (room hire could be secured FOC through ED connection)

Photography – in addition to those procured from contacts, budget £250 / quarter

Tiered delivery

As a final proposition a tiered package can be put forward to gauge the capacity within SHDC to resource current activities and whether capital investment in additional resource is required and / or feasible.

| | Bronze | Silver | Gold |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Newsletter / bulletins | Y | Y | Y |
| Twitter | Y | Y | Y |
| Linkedin | Y | Y | Y |
| Networking events | - | Y | Y |
| Strategic briefing | Y | Y | Y |
| Roundtables | - | Y | Y |
| Business Ambassadors | Y | Y | Y |
| Blog posts | Bi-monthly | Bi-monthly | Monthly |
| Infographics | Bi-monthly | Bi-monthly | Monthly |
| Microsite maintenance | Y | Y | Y |
| Case study (video) | - | Bi-annual | Quarterly |
| Photography | - | - | £250 / quarter |
| Total hrs / month | 40 | 59 | 65 |

Gold package would require additional internal resource and capital investment in professional photography.

Produced by Opportunity Peterborough.

September 2018.

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