

Supporting more effective communications

Workshop with Dr. Kathy Walsh
16th Oct 2025

Purpose

**Provide ideas on how to
make communications
with the local
authority more effective...**

Agenda

- ▶ What is Effective Communication
- ▶ Developing a Clear message
- ▶ Identifying your audience

What is Effective Communications

What is Effective Communications

- ▶ Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose. When communication is effective, both the communicator and the receiver feel satisfied.
- ▶ Communication occurs in both verbal and non-verbal forms, such as written, visual, and listening. It can occur in person, on the internet (on forums, social media, and websites), over the phone (through apps, calls, and video), or by mail.

For communication to be effective

Develop your message

- ▶ Clearly
- ▶ Correctly
- ▶ Complete
- ▶ Concise
- ▶ Courteous/Consideration

Identify your Audience

- ▶ Consider your Audience options
- ▶ Chose the best medium
- ▶ Practice Active Listening
pay attention to body language,
give encouraging verbal cues,
ask questions and practicing non-judgment.

Development of your Message

For communication to be effective

Develop your message

1. Clearly
2. Correctly
3. Complete
4. Concise
5. Courteous/Consideration

1 Clarity of the Message

- ▶ Communicate in a way that is easy to understand and is clear.
- ▶ Avoid vague messages and responses
- ▶ Define the terms used
- ▶ Set the context in a manner that directs your communication clearly.
- ▶ Keep the number of ideas in your sentences to a minimum,
- ▶ Try to use facts and figures in your writing to have a greater impact.

Clarity will help build trust.

2 Correctness/Accuracy

- ▶ Ensure the facts are accurate. (detail the sources), a correct message ensures that your exchanges are correct and resonate in the right way.
- ▶ Double-check facts and figures before communicating them.
- ▶ Consider the relevance of the information you are sharing.

Being correct/accurate in communication helps build trust

3 Completeness of the message

- ▶ Covered the topic comprehensively.
- ▶ Addresses not just the `what`, but also the `why`, `how`, and `when`.
- ▶ When presenting an idea, include enough information to prove your thesis (i.e., your topic sentence).
- ▶ Three supporting sentences and a concluding sentence are usually sufficient to complete the paragraph. The concluding sentence of the paragraph should summarize your main idea by reinforcing your topic sentence.
- ▶ Depending on the issue, you might consider adding a call to action to your text.

4 Conciseness of the Message

- ▶ By being concise, you leave less room for misunderstanding.
- ▶ Make every word count. Delete redundant words and simplify wordy expressions. Remove any filler words.
- ▶ Avoid overexplaining and adding in surplus information.
- ▶ A concise message is distilled to its essential elements, saving both your time and your recipient's. It focuses on the 'need-to-know' without compromising on critical details.
- ▶ Cut unnecessary words and phrases that dilute your main points.
- ▶ Use bullet points to highlight key messages effectively.

5 Courteousness of the message

- ▶ Emphasises politeness, consideration, and respect for the audience.
- ▶ It involves using a respectful tone,
- ▶ Avoids hurtful language, and shows empathy,

This helps build trust and makes others more receptive to your message.

Example of a One Page Template

Issue Description	Provide a clear and concise explanation of the issue. Include location, frequency, and any specific incidents or patterns observed. Mention how long the issue has been occurring
Impact on the Community:	Explain how the issue affects local residents, businesses, safety, wellbeing, or access to public services. Be specific and factual
Suggested Actions:	We respectfully request that the Council consider the following steps to address the issue: • [Suggested action 1 - e.g., “Install additional lighting near the playground”] • [Suggested action 2 - e.g., “Engage with local youth groups to promote
Supporting Information:	

Example 1 of a Clear Message

Input from four local resident groups regarding recurring antisocial behaviour in the Castle Park in Trim

Over the past month, there have been frequent incidents involving loud gatherings late at night, littering, vandalism of park benches and bins, and occasional verbal abuse directed at passersby.

These activities have made the park feel unsafe, particularly for families with young children and elderly residents who regularly use the space during the day. Several community members have reported feeling intimidated and have begun avoiding the park altogether, which is deeply unfortunate given its importance as a shared recreational space.

We kindly request that the Council consider the following measures:

- Installation of additional lighting and CCTV in key areas
- Community signage promoting respectful use of public space
- Communication with An Garda Síochána to request increased Garda patrols during evening hours

We are happy to assist in any way, including participating in a community meeting or helping to gather further feedback from residents.

We hope for a prompt and constructive response to help restore the park as a safe and welcoming space for all.

Example 2 of a Clear Message

- ▶ Express concern on behalf of several local groups regarding the recent changes to the opening hours at Trim Library. We understand that the library now opens later and closes earlier on weekdays, and is no longer open on Saturdays.
- ▶ While we appreciate the challenges involved in staffing and budgeting, these changes have significantly impacted many members of our community. Students preparing for exams, parents with young children, and older residents who rely on the library for social connection and access to resources are finding it increasingly difficult to visit during the new limited hours.
- ▶ The Saturday closure, in particular, has been disruptive for working families who previously used the weekend to access books, attend events, and participate in educational activities.
- ▶ We respectfully request that the Council reconsider these changes or explore alternative solutions, such as:
 - ▶ • Restoring Saturday hours, even on a reduced basis
 - ▶ • Extending weekday hours one or two evenings per week
 - ▶ • Consulting with the community to better understand usage patterns and needs
- ▶ We would welcome the opportunity to participate in any public consultation or feedback process you may offer. We hope for a resolution that supports continued access to this vital community resource.

Identification of your Audience

Consider is it within the Remit of Local Government

- ▶ Deals only with certain functions, housing and building; roads; development, planning and land use; recreation and amenities; libraries; and some aspects of environmental protection.
- ▶ Functions are often largely controlled and funded by central government, mainly through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- ▶ Campaigns for change can only deal with certain issues in certain ways through the local authorities: to be fully successful, they must engage with a much wider range of actors further afield.

Consider Your Audience?

Executive

and/or

Elected Representative

Consider Your Executive Audience?

Who

Which section

What level/seniority

Level of interest/involvement in the topic of your communication

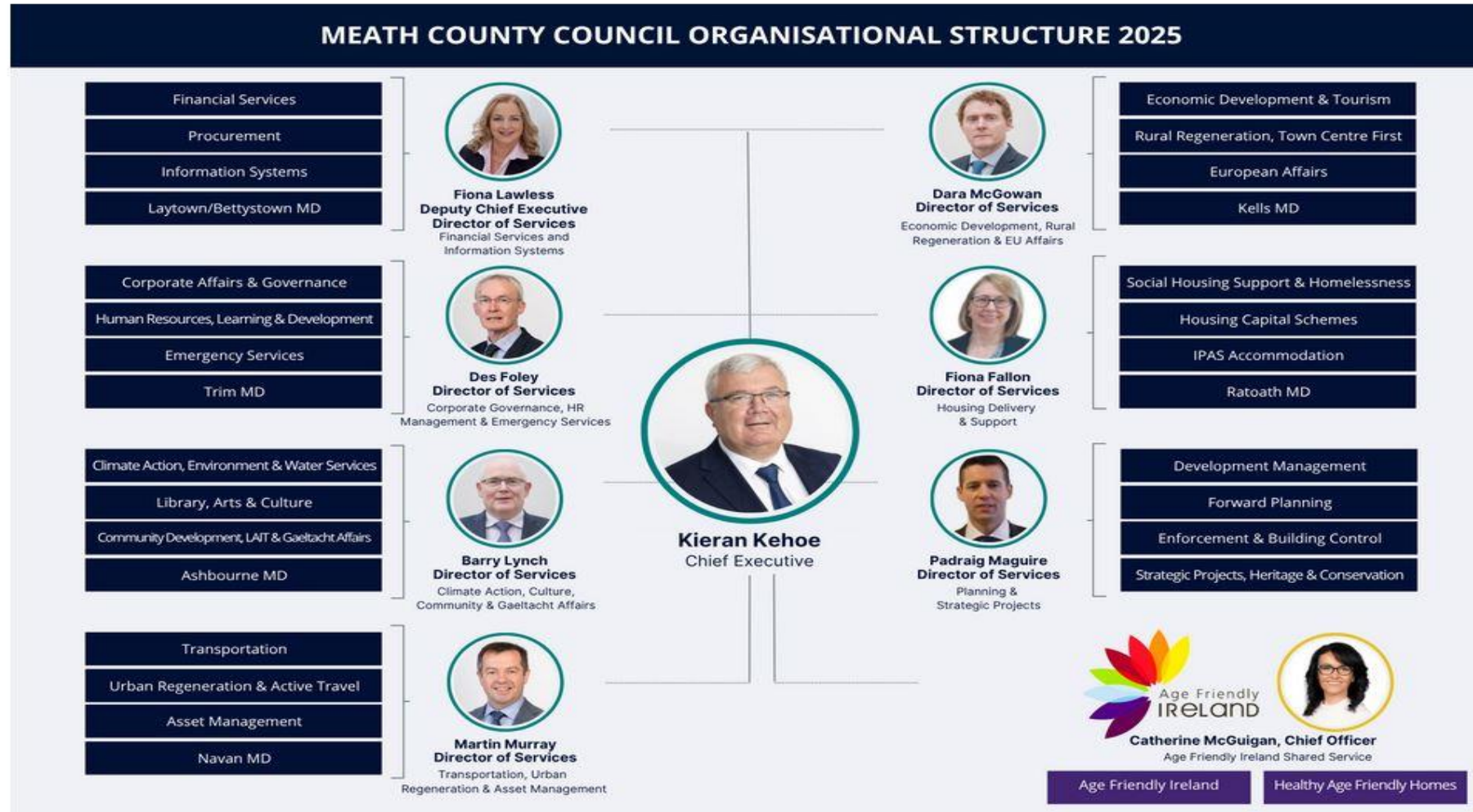
How

Informal meetings

Formal meetings

Preparation of a paper

Know/establish relationships with key people



Consider Your Political Audience?

Who

What party/independents/ Cross party?

Level of interest/relevance of the topic of your communication to them and their electorate?

How

As Individuals

At Municipal-District level

At County Level

As members of a specific Strategic Policy Committee

As members of the Corporate Policy Group

As a member of other Committees

- Joint Policing Committee
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Regional Assembly

Meath Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) 2024-2029

- 1 Forward Planning and Development
 - 2 Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services
 - 3 Transportation and Urban Regeneration
 - 4 Housing and Integration
 - 5 Community and Cultural Development and Gaeltacht Affairs
 - 6. Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism EU Affairs and Rural Regeneration
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Local Community Safety Partnerships (shortly)

Know the key people

Forward Planning & Development Management	Climate Action, Environment & Emergency Services	Transportation and Urban Regeneration	Housing and Integration	Community & Cultural Development and Gaeltacht Affairs	Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism, EU Affairs and Rural Regeneration
Cllr Stephen McKee	Cllr Michael Gallagher	Cllr Mike Bray	Cllr Francis Deane	Cllr Ronan Moore	Cllr Joe Fox
Cllr Peter Caffrey	Cllr Suzanne Jamal	Cllr Wayne Harding	Cllr Eddie Fennessy	Cllr David Gilroy	Cllr Eugene Cassidy
Cllr Fionnan Blake	Cllr Sharon Tolan	Cllr Paddy Meade	Cllr Alan Lawes	Cllr Yemi Adenuga	Cllr Brian Fitzgerald
Cllr Conor Tormey	Cllr Joe Bonner	Cllr Amanda Smith	Cllr Nick Killian	Cllr Maria White	Cllr Sarah Reilly
Cllr Noel French	Cllr Dave Boyne	Cllr Caroline O'Reilly	Cllr Maria Murphy	Cllr Helen Meyer	Cllr Gerry O'Connor
Cllr John Duffy	Cllr Alan Tobin	Cllr Sean Drew	Cllr Carol Lennon	Cllr Emer Toibin	Cllr Pdraig Fitzsimons
Fergal Hennessy (IFA)	Martin Heaney (IFA)	Paula McCaul (Chamber of Commerce)	Cllr Pdraig Coffey	Cllr Yvonne Everard	Cllr Paul O'Rourke
Alan Hora (CIF)	Michael Breen, (Environment Pillar PPN)	Dave Anderson, (Environment Pillar PPN)	Cllr Geraldine Keogan	Paula McCaul (Chamber of Commerce)	Dermot Ward (IFA)
Fran O'Connor, (Social Inclusion Pillar PPN)	Frank O'Sullivan (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)	Josephine Reynolds O'Connor, (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)	Yurii Dunin, (Environment Pillar PPN)	Siun O'Connor, (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)	Paula McCaul (Chamber of Commerce)
			Nazih Eldin, (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)	Lisa Rowntree, (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)	Carol McSherry (ICTU)
			Kay Kearns, (Social Inclusion Pillar PPN)	Ursula Ní Shionnain (Social Inclusion Pillar PPN)	Anne Headley, (Environment Pillar PPN)
			John Michael Murphy (Community Voluntary Pillar PPN)		

SPC purpose/role?

- ▶ To advise and assist Council in policy, formulation and development.
- ▶ Invite individuals or representatives of organizations to make presentations, following which they may be questioned or cross-examined.
- ▶ Local authority officials may be invited to report on or give an 'update' or 'progress report' on a particular issue, key points will be minuted;
- ▶ External experts may give presentations. Again, the subsequent discussion may be minuted;
- ▶ Issues may be raised on 'Matters Arising', 'Any other business', or 'Correspondence' (if submitted beforehand).
- ▶ A small number of SPCs have 'Issues raised by PPN members';
- ▶ New developments, plans, consultations or projects in the local authority may be put out for discussion.
- ▶ Some SPC's can include a lot of administrative details (e.g. housing SPC's in some locations)

'They are not decision-making bodies, but a sounding board, channel of influence, 'soft' power.'

Homework

- ▶ Departmental guidelines on how SPCs are supposed to work;
- ▶ The new SPC scheme in the local authority;
- ▶ Agenda and minutes of previous meetings, which give an idea of how they function;-
- ▶ Other rules governing the operation of local authorities e.g. standing orders.



MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ORDERS

REGULATING THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL

Page 23 for specific SPC
Standing Orders

Corporate Policy Group

- ▶ The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) provides a forum for policy issues outside the remit of individual Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), which can be discussed and agreed for submission to the full Council.
- ▶ It provides a forum where policy decisions affecting Meath can be agreed for submission to the full Council. The CPG usually meets before the monthly Council meeting.
- ▶ All municipal districts are represented on the CPG including the chairpersons of the SPCs.
- ▶ The Corporate Policy Group consists of:
 - The Cathaoirleach
 - The Chairpersons of the Strategic Policy Committees
 - The Chief Executive.

Develop a Sample Ask?

In Summary More Effective Communications

- ▶ Develop your ask
- ▶ Be clear that the issue is something that is the responsibility of the local authority
- ▶ Identify your audience- the medium by which you will communicate with them

Next Step- Make the ask



▶ Thank You for Your Time

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