

Communications Plan - Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub

Background

This Communications and Engagement Plan supports the development and delivery of the Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub, ensuring key audiences are informed, involved, and supportive at each stage. It underpins the council's strategic objectives, particularly in health, leisure participation, and financial sustainability.

Communications and engagement objectives

- Raise awareness of the project's purpose, benefits, and timeline.
- Facilitate two-way communication and feedback with stakeholders and the wider community.
- Build and maintain public confidence.
- Promote the strategic value of the project in addressing health, wellbeing, and infrastructure gaps.
- Ensure alignment with council strategic priorities and One Leisure's transformation goals.

Key messages

- The Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub is a significant investment in local health, leisure, and wellbeing.
- It addresses the district-wide shortfall in aquatic provision, modernises facilities, and improves accessibility.
- This investment maximises swimming, health, and fitness opportunities for residents of all ages.
- The new hub is designed for future generations and supports sustainable council operations.

Audiences

Audience	Stakeholders
Primary Audiences	• Existing leisure centre users • Potential new leisure centre users • Residents • Senior Leadership Team • Council Cabinet • NHS & ICB partners • Local schools and sports clubs • Local business networks
Secondary Audiences	• Huntingdon Town Council

	• One Leisure staff and facility operators • District councillors and Members • Local media • Community and voluntary groups
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Stakeholder Matrix

The stakeholder matrix has been designed in accordance with the council's [engagement principles](#).

Stakeholder	Interest/Influence	Role	Engagement strategy
HDC Councillors and Staff	High / High	Decision-makers, project delivery	Inform, Consult
Member Advisory Board	High / High	Cross-party guidance and support	Collaborate
Sport England & Swim England	High / Medium	Strategic, technical partners	Involve, Consult
NHS & Integrated Care Board (ICB)	High / High	Health service integration	Collaborate, Co-design
St Peter's Secondary School	Medium / Medium	Local site partner	Consult, Involve
Cambridgeshire County Council	High / Medium	Infrastructure and planning input	Consult
Huntingdon Town Council	High / High	Local government liaison	Inform, Consult
Local Sporting Clubs & Site Organisations	Medium / High	Current and future users	Involve
General Public & Community Residents	Medium / High	Leisure users (existing and new), taxpayers	Inform, Engage
Media & Press	Medium / High	Public communication platform	Inform
Alliance Leisure & Consultants	High / High	Design and delivery partners	Collaborate, Inform

Communication channels

- Council website and social media

- One Leisure digital communications
- Stakeholder briefings and newsletters
- Local media (print, radio, TV)
- Public meetings, webinars, and consultation events
- On-site signage and digital boards
- Email marketing to current gym members

Communication and engagement phases and timeline

The communications and engagement approach will be developed around the following key phases.

Phase	Status	Timeframe	Objective	Key activities
RIBA Stage 1	Complete	April 2025	Internal and stakeholder briefing	Position statement to Councillors, staff, and key partners
RIBA Stage 2	Complete	May – Sept 2025	Stakeholder engagement and soft public messaging	Stakeholder meetings, website content, social media, informal Q&A
RIBA Stages 3 & 4	Progressing	Early 2026	Formal public consultation and campaign launch	Community consultation events, digital surveys, public briefings, media rollout

Roles and responsibilities

Team/individual	Responsibility
Head of Leisure, Health & Environment	Overall leadership, stakeholder engagement, strategic oversight
Comms Team	Communications strategy, messaging, media and digital comms delivery
Executive Councillor – Health & Leisure	Political spokesperson, supports public and stakeholder confidence
Shadow Board	Provides strategic political insight and advisory function
Alliance Leisure	TBC
Huntingdon Town Council	TBC
Cam Academy Trust	TBC

Communications sign off

Before any communications are issued, key representatives from all primary partners (HDC, HTC, Cam Academy Trust, Alliance Leisure), must have confirmed they are happy to sign off via email.

Risk mitigation

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation measures
Low public awareness	Medium	Medium	Gradual public messaging, community teasers, use of local media and social platforms
Stakeholder disengagement	High	Medium	Regular direct communication, personalised briefings, Shadow Board involvement
Misinformation or negative perceptions	High	High	Develop clear, accessible FAQs, rapid response comms, proactive Q&A opportunities
Political delays or conflicting priorities	High	Medium	Maintain Councillor briefings, align project stages with Council calendars
Budget pressure or financial uncertainty	High	Medium	Transparent budget reporting, phased RIBA delivery, and clarity on pre-construction fees
Misalignment with partner bodies	High	Low	Early collaboration, shared objectives, formal agreements where necessary

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Engagement metrics:** Attendance at engagement events, survey completion rates, digital engagement stats.
- **Sentiment analysis:** Social media monitoring, stakeholder feedback sessions, qualitative comment analysis.
- **Reporting frequency:** Quarterly internal review, formal Cabinet update at the end of each RIBA stage.
- **Adjustments:** Engagement plan will be updated following each RIBA stage to reflect public feedback and evolving needs.

Appendix 1 - RIBA Stage 3 & 4

“Huntingdonshire District Council completed a strategic review of its facilities with a Built Facility Strategy in 2023. Following this an Independent Review of One Leisure was undertaken in 2024 and as part of this process the council identified how and where capital investment could be spent over the coming years. Through this process it prioritised that investment was required to start at Huntingdon Leisure Centre.

“Over the last 12 months the council has been working in collaboration with its leisure development partner, Alliance Leisure. Through this process the council has approved a preferred option to be put forward for planning approval and wider development. This can be seen on the council’s planning portal.

“We would welcome any comments or feedback relating directly to this exciting leisure development so that these ideas can be factored into the final design and planning process.”