



Local Government Reorganisation
Communications Audit Proposal

Helping Councils Communicate the Biggest
Change in Local Government for 50 Years

Local Government Reorganisation represents one of the most significant changes to local government in a generation. Whilst councils are investing substantial time and resource into developing business cases, governance structures and implementation plans, many have not yet fully considered how they will explain this transformation to residents, businesses, partners, staff and elected members.

The councils that communicate best throughout the reorganisation process will build trust, reduce confusion, strengthen stakeholder confidence and create the foundations for successful new authorities.

Penshaw has developed a three-week Local Government Reorganisation Communications Audit designed to help councils assess where they are today, identify gaps and risks, and build a clear communications roadmap through to vesting day and beyond.



What We Will Cover

Our audit will undertake a comprehensive review of all communications activity relating to Local Government Reorganisation.

Phase One: Historical Communications Review

We will review all internal and external communications issued between:

- Publication of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment White Paper
- Development of reorganisation proposals
- Publication of the council's preferred business case

This review will assess:

- Strategic messaging
- Resident communications
- Staff communications
- Member communications
- Stakeholder engagement
- Media handling
- Digital communications
- Consultation materials
- Public engagement activity

We will identify:

- Message consistency
- Audience understanding
- Communications gaps
- Areas of misinformation or confusion
- Missed engagement opportunities
- Reputational risks



Phase Two: Current Communications Assessment

We will review all subsequent communications activity and assess whether communications plans remain aligned with the changing requirements of the LGR programme.

Particular focus will be given to:

- Resident awareness
- Service continuity messaging
- Staff confidence and engagement
- Stakeholder confidence
- Political communications
- Future authority branding and identity
- Public understanding of the transition timetable



Communications Roadmaps

The audit will culminate in three practical communications roadmaps.



Roadmap One: Now to Shadow Authority

A strategic communications plan covering:

- Key announcements
- Resident engagement
- Stakeholder management
- Member communications
- Consultation activity
- Risk management
- Political communications
- Media engagement

Roadmap Two: Shadow Authority to Vesting Day

A detailed plan covering:

- Building awareness of the new authority
- Service transition communications
- Leadership communications
- Governance changes
- Staff engagement
- Elections and democratic representation
- New authority branding and identity
- Public reassurance around service continuity

Roadmap Three: First 100 Days Following Vesting Day

A practical communications plan designed to support the launch and early operation of the new authority, including:

- Public launch communications
- Resident information campaigns
- Service access communications
- Customer journey communications
- Reputation management
- Community engagement
- Stakeholder confidence building
- Early success stories and transformation narratives

Our Approach

This is not simply a communications review. Penshaw combines political insight, local government expertise and strategic communications experience to assess not only what has been communicated, but whether those messages are landing with the audiences that matter most.

Our audit will include:

Key Message Analysis

We will assess:

- What messages have been used
- Whether those messages are consistent
- Whether they resonate with target audiences
- What concerns remain unaddressed

Stakeholder Mapping

We will undertake a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise covering:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Town and parish councils
- Health partners
- Education providers
- Community organisations
- Voluntary sector partners
- Staff
- Trade unions
- Elected members
- MPs and regional stakeholders

Best Practice Review

Drawing on examples from across England, we will identify best practice approaches to:

- Resident engagement
- Service communications
- Staff communications
- Digital engagement
- Public consultation
- Stakeholder management
- Political leadership during reorganisation

Communications Framework

We will provide recommendations for:

- High-level strategic communications
- Business-as-usual service communications
- Transformation communications
- Crisis and reputational management
- Digital and social media activity
- Member communications

Why Penshaw?

Penshaw was founded by Gavin Callaghan, former Leader of Basildon Council and one of local government's leading voices on devolution and local government reform.

Gavin has been directly involved in discussions surrounding the Government's devolution agenda and has worked closely with ministers, officials and local government leaders throughout the development of Local Government Reorganisation proposals and Devolution Priority Programme submissions.

He understands both the policy intent behind reform and the political realities of delivering it.

Importantly, Penshaw understands what resonates with residents, businesses, elected members and local stakeholders – and what does not. Alongside Gavin, Penshaw brings together communications professionals with first-hand experience of local government communications, public engagement, political communications and organisational transformation.

This combination of strategic, political and operational expertise enables us to provide councils with practical recommendations that can be implemented immediately.



How the Audit Works

2169

😊 2561

Week One

Discovery and evidence gathering

- Review of communications materials
- Stakeholder interviews
- Communications channel assessment
- Digital and social media review
- Baseline messaging assessment

Week Two

Analysis and evaluation

- Message testing
- Communications gap analysis
- Stakeholder mapping
- Best practice benchmarking
- Risk and opportunity assessment

Week Three

Recommendations and roadmap development

- Communications audit report
- Strategic recommendations
- Three communications roadmaps
- Priority actions
- Quick wins
- Long-term communications framework

Final Presentation

The project concludes with an in-person presentation to the Chief Executive, Leader and senior leadership team.

This session will provide:

- Key findings
- Strategic risks
- Recommended actions
- Communications priorities
- Roadmap walkthrough
- Discussion and challenge session



Why This Matters

Many councils are rightly focused on developing robust business cases and implementation plans.

However, successful Local Government Reorganisation is ultimately dependent on public understanding, stakeholder confidence and organisational readiness.

Without a clear communications strategy councils risk:

- Increased public opposition
- Misinformation and speculation
- Staff uncertainty and disengagement
- Stakeholder resistance
- Reduced confidence in the new authority
- Reputational damage during transition

The communications challenge extends far beyond explaining structural change.

Councils should be considering:

- How residents will access services after shadow elections
- How residents will understand the role of the new authority
- How service changes will be communicated
- How local identity will be maintained
- How businesses will engage with the new council
- How local care markets for adults and children's services will be informed and developed
- How providers will be prepared for commissioning changes
- Whether every service area has a communications plan for transition
- How customer contact arrangements will be communicated
- How staff will act as ambassadors for change

The authorities that plan these communications early will be better positioned to deliver successful reorganisation and realise the benefits outlined in their business cases.

