

case study

Peterborough City Council

Secondary schools modernisation programme

Peterborough City Council's £110 million Secondary Schools' Modernisation Programme currently includes the building of two new schools and the refurbishment and extension of a further seven within the Greater Peterborough area. The programme incorporates a £64 million PFI project, a new Academy and further capital funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The success of the Secondary Schools Modernisation Programme is vital to the achievement of one of the City Council's key medium term objectives – the raising of educational achievement levels in Peterborough.

Athene's approach

Athene's support has included:

- Strategic communications planning and advice to ensure consistency of message and maximum engagement with all stakeholders – both external and internal. This includes communications around 'convergence' issues for merging schools.
- Crisis media and stakeholder management surrounding a funding shortfall and public demonstrations against the proposed school extension.
- Proactive and reactive media relations with regional and trade media including:
 - PFI project milestones (eg. selection of preferred bidders, public exhibitions, outline planning approval).
 - Launch of the new Voyager School including a reception for key local stakeholders and aeroplane 'fly past' trailing the new school name.
 - Applications for further funding.
- Development of newsletters and brochures for parents, governors, the local community and potential PFI bidders.
- Organisation of open days and public exhibitions, including development of display materials and supporting publicity.

Results

Effective media management has resulted in balanced, fair reporting on contentious issues, and the development of comprehensive position statements has ensured consistency of message as new issues have emerged.

Positive media coverage for the programme has been secured throughout on regional radio and TV and in regional print media, as well as in trade publications such as Local Government Chronicle and PFI Net.

Testimonial

"Athene has worked with us on a number of major projects over the past few years. Their strategic approach to communications has ensured the delivery of robust, focused campaigns that have consistently served to enhance and protect the Council's reputation. Their consultants have worked with us closely to establish our objectives, aspirations and challenges and, importantly, have not been afraid to challenge our thinking along the way."

Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive,
Peterborough City Council