
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	9TH SEPTEMBER 2010	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CAROLE WARBURTON (595741) Carole.warburton@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10 AND ACTION PLAN 2010/11	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM05

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the refreshed Corporate Communications Action Plan for 2010-2011 is approved. The Action Plan is shown at Appendix A and the refreshed Corporate Communications Strategy 2010-2015 is available on the intranet. <http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/comms/folder.2009-04-14.0525912252/corpcomms2010-2015>
- 1.2 That Members note the key communication achievements for the year ending 31st March 2010.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report looks back at the outcomes of the first year of the consolidated Communications Team and presents an action plan for 2010/11 that details how communication activities will support the delivery of key priorities set down in the Corporate Plan 2009/14.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 This is the first Annual Report to the Finance and Management Committee about the work of the new consolidated Communications Team. It details the achievements of the new strategic approach to external and internal communications, along with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2009-2010 corporate campaigns.
- 3.2 The Communication Team's work in strengthening brand and corporate identity guidelines and advances in e-communications has increased the awareness of South Derbyshire District Council across the district. Improvements in internal communications have had an effect on the workforce. The New Reputation Project (NRP), created following detailed research by LGComms, will support the Council's future campaigns. The NRP can be found at [LGA Reputation Campaign](#).

4.0 **Detail**

4.1 The Communications Team has become established over the last year. The team uses media management, graphic design, new media, social marketing, the website and the intranet along with reputation and brand management to inform residents, businesses, tourists, partners and stakeholders about the services provided by South Derbyshire District Council. The benefits of centralising the Communications Team have been shown over the past year.

4.2 In **external communications** the Council's reputation has been successfully promoted using targeted campaigns linked to the Corporate Plan priorities.

4.3 Increased positive media coverage, showcasing our achievements as an organisation and those of individual Councillors and members of staff, have provided case studies showing our strategic priorities and corporate responsibilities. Regular articles have appeared in local newspapers, such as the Burton Mail and Derby Evening Telegraph, along with more coverage on local radio and television.

On average, 20 press releases have been issued each month. Written responses to press enquiries are also provided as well as telephone responses.

4.4 **Campaigns 2009-2010**

Over the last year we identified a number of corporate campaigns to support the delivery of key priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2009-2014. The first year of campaigns included the following.

4.5 **Leisure and lifestyle features in the Burton Mail**

Corporate Plan – Lifestyle choices, promoting healthy facilities and lifestyle, supporting cultural events and activities

The Communications Team has secured free coverage in the Burton Mail every Saturday as part of a Leisure section. If this were classed as advertising it would cost approximately £26,000 per annum. By providing weekly copy on the leisure pages, we have achieved feature articles. These have increased the opportunity for local people to take part in activities while raising the profile and reputation of the Council.

4.5 **Launch of the Etwall Leisure Centre**

Corporate Plan – Lifestyle choices, promoting healthy facilities and lifestyles

The Communications Team handled the publicity for the launch of this £6.7M centre. The development of the Etwall Leisure Centre brand was handled through the Communications Team, this included the new design of the logo by our Graphic Designer and the development of a range of associated literature. Since opening on August 5th 2009, the Centre has had 196,322 visitors.

4.6 **Cleaner South Derbyshire Campaign**

Corporate Plan – Sustainable growth and opportunity

Through the Graphic Designer's branding, a highly visible campaign encouraged local people, businesses and groups to make South Derbyshire a better place to live by keeping the District clean, tidy and free of litter. Promotional items were designed to include the national 'Recycle Now' message and this now appears on all printed materials. Work carried out included litter picks, litter reduction, dog

fouling prevention, sprucing up parks and open spaces and tackling graffiti and vandalism.

4.7 **Beat the Crunch Campaign**

Corporate Plan – Sustainable growth and opportunity – maximise the survival and growth prospects of local businesses

As the recession affected more local people, the Council took the lead in providing support to hard-pressed businesses and residents. This included an event in the Town Hall for people wanting to set up business and for those needing information about welfare support. During the Christmas season, attendance increased the late night shopping and Christmas Lights events following a series of poster campaigns, encouraging people to 'Shop Local' and 'Switch On'. This work was supported by an on-line campaign by the Web Editor, media promotion by the Communications Officer, coverage in What's On and branding by the Graphic Designer. On-going support includes the promotion of the 'Business Breakfast' events and further promotion of 'Shop Local'.

4.8 **The Value for Money Campaign**

Corporate Plan, Value for Money, high standards of corporate governance, increasing efficiency and improving performance through external assessment

As well as the introduction of an Annual Report in 2008-2009, this campaign also involved the promotion of the Council through the design and publication of the Corporate Plan, as well as the re-design of the Council Tax and NNDR leaflets. The Standards Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were also promoted throughout the year as well as Area Forums. The Council continued to improve its reputation throughout the year and this was publicised through the Annual Audit Letter, the report on Corporate Governance and the evaluation of the Council's work using the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

4.9 **Swim4Life Campaign**

Corporate Plan, Lifestyle Choices, promoting healthy facilities and lifestyle

Working with Leisure and Community staff, this national campaign was launched and promoted in South Derbyshire to give free swimming to under 18s and over 60s. To support the media and publicity work, posters and banners were created by the Graphic Designer to promote the campaign. During 2009/10 we had 46,869 under 18s free swims and 21,591 by the over 60s.

4.10 **Brand and Corporate Identity Guidelines**

Design guidelines have been created including templates for standard notices, booklets, presentations and posters, which are accessible to all staff. This will be further developed in the coming year to encourage staff to recognise further the significance of a standard visual identity. All publications are now being reviewed by the Communications Team to ensure that the guidelines are met so all material is readily identified with Council services.

4.11 **E-communications**

The website has been migrated from Derbyshire County Council to develop a South Derbyshire persona. Over the past year South Derbyshire District Council has consistently been in the top quartile of local authority websites. Further development of the website to incorporate more images and cross-referencing of will be undertaken.

Social media, Twitter and Flickr, have been tested as tools to communicate and improve engagement with our stakeholders. It is now time to review and evaluate

the success of this activity and to review opportunities that other social media channels such as You Tube, Facebook, and LinkedIn may present.

Other new technologies will also be explored such as virtual brochure and leaflet 'bookshops' (eg. www.issuu.com). These may provide cost effective methods of distributing publications such as the 'What's On' guide and visitor guides, together with more interactive and engaging presentation formats.

4.12 **Achievements in communications**

The new Reputation Index, created by LGComms using the Place Survey 2008-2009, takes background population characteristics into account to provide a level playing field by which to judge all local authorities on how well they have engaged with their communities. South Derbyshire District Council, during the first year of the Communications Team's work, was judged to be in the third quartile, with four being the best performing quartile.

For information, the scores of some of our neighbouring local authorities were

Quartile 1 - Amber Valley Borough Council, Derby City Council and Tamworth Borough Council

Quartile 2 - East Staffordshire Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council, Erewash Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council and North West Leicestershire District Council

Quartile 3 - Derbyshire Dales District Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and South Derbyshire District Council

Quartile 4 - Bolsover District Council

4.13 With **internal communications**, 'better', an eye-catching electronic staff magazine, has replaced the pages of written copy in the Team Briefing Notes. In a lively and interesting format, 'better' enabled staff to realise how they and their colleagues contributed to what the Council was delivering overall.

4.14 Last year, blogs were established as a two-way conversation between Corporate Management Team and staff where they could raise issues personally or anonymously. The blog was also used to empower staff to ask questions at whole staff meetings with the Corporate Management Team, anonymously, if required. In a time of change, any issue could be raised.

4.15 In a review of internal communications out of 108 responses

- 88% of employees said that they read 'better'.
- 79.9% said that 'better' is very or fairly useful in keeping them informed
- 87% of employees said that they read the corporate blogs
- Just over two thirds of employees said that blogs were very or fairly useful in keeping them informed
- 72.3% employees would like to continue to receive information about what the Council is doing through 'better'.

4.16 Following this review, we have committed to improving our internal communications further by:

- continuing to keep 'better' fresh and interesting by asking staff for new ideas and creating an index for 'better' to enable staff to 'click' on the sections that are particularly interesting to them.
- focussing the blogs on the issues that are important to staff and continue to ask staff for their views on the topics that you would like to be covered.
- using staff briefings to communicate the formal messages to staff and make these briefings more interactive for staff by letting them know in advance of the topics covered, so that they can ask any questions/issues that can then be covered at the briefing.
- reminding managers about the importance of holding regular team meetings, and continuing to encourage teams to consider other activities, such as team building or personal development (e-learning) that could also be held during this time.
- discussing the results of the survey with the Employee Forum at their next meeting and identifying actions to address these concerns.
- developing a corporate e-mail that can be used to convey such messages so that all users quickly identify it. It will also include a reminder to pass on this type of information to colleagues without direct access to a PC.

4.17 Achievements in internal communications

- During the year, the Authority finished in 57th place in the prestigious Sunday Times list of the top 75 Best Public Sector Companies to Work For 2010, we also achieved a 'One to watch' status in the Best Companies Accreditation 2010 for demonstrating high levels of employee engagement. Only a small number of organisations achieved the 'One to watch' status this year, which demonstrates the Council is considered a good employer.
- The Sunday Times survey also identified that employees levels of satisfaction with their job and the organisation have increased by 3%. This suggests that employees are more positive about working for the Council in terms of valuing the organisation, are proud to work here and feel that it is making a difference.
- There has been a 3% increase in the feeling that the Council had a positive impact on society as measured through the last Place Survey in Autumn 2008.

5.0 Looking Ahead

5.1 To meet the challenges being set by Central Government Policy and the National Reputation (NRA) campaign launched in June 2010, to raise the profile of public services. Our revised Communications Strategy focuses on the principles on the of the NRA campaign. Furthermore, we will continue to work closely with the Consultation Officer to promote effective engagement with the community and then analyse, evaluate and communicate the actions the Council will take and the outcomes that are expected.

5.2 Our external work will primarily focus on the achievement of the key priorities under the Corporate Plan 2009/14 through the provision of corporate campaigns. Internally, our work will focus on raising the profile of the Council as an employer of choice and improving staff engagement. An Action Plan is appended but a summary of some of the key actions that need to take place in 2010/2011 is covered below.

5.3 Develop corporate campaigns linked to the delivery of the key priorities within the Corporate Plan.

5.3.1 Moving forward into 2010/2011, we are continuing to promote the Council by embarking on a new schedule of campaigns. These will help promote the Council's reputation within the District and help us deliver on our Corporate Plan priorities. It will also help us address some of the lower than average rates of satisfaction in some Council services and improve the perception of the District that were highlighted in the recent Place Survey undertaken in 2008/2009.

5.4 Further develop internal communications to add to a dialogue with staff during a time of change and economic restraint.

5.4.1 Over the last year the Communications Team has introduced new internal communication methods including the 'better' magazine and corporate blogs so that information can be shared and exchanged effectively within the Council. We are now reviewing our internal communication methods and, as part of this a short on-line survey was emailed to employees to complete. We received 108 responses to the survey. Overall, the results reveal that employees find staff briefings the most useful mechanism of keeping them informed about what's happening within the Council, followed by the 'better' magazine.

5.4.2 We will continue to look at new ways of engaging with staff whilst building on the ways that our staff find the most useful in keeping them informed on what is happening in the Council. If we keep staff informed, they could act as advocates and ambassadors for the Council.

5.5 Work with the South Derbyshire Partnership and other public sector providers to promote partnership projects across South Derbyshire.

5.5.1 We will continue to work closely with the Partnership and promote the important work that is happening across the District. With our partners we are able to deliver added value by coming together to put projects in place that have changed people's lives. During the next 12 months, we will look to promote these to the local media and, where appropriate, put these forward for regional and national recognition.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 All activities in the last year have been funded from existing resources and it is intended to continue developing and innovating communications without increased expenditure.

7.0 Corporate Implications

7.1 The Communications Team delivers on those projects set out in the Corporate Communications Strategy, which all link back to the Council's Corporate Plan themes and priorities.

7.2 Communications campaigns are directed towards improving the reputation of the Council and improving satisfaction with Council Services. This is highlighted through the Reputation Index contained in the NRP, and through satisfaction measures contained in the Place Survey with local services and the local area. This provides the evidence that we are achieving what local people have asked for.

8.0 Community Implications

- 8.1 The Communications Team will be using the NRP from LGComms to drive the Council's own priorities, taken from its Corporate Plan. The NRP provides the comprehensive research-based rationale to enable local authorities to lead their local areas. It focuses on five "Rules for reputation" which will be part of the campaigns in this year's Corporate Communications Strategy.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Through its Action Plan for 2010-2011 and through its refreshed Corporate Communications Strategy 2010-2014, the Council further develops its reputation locally, regionally and nationally. The Council will through its commitment to residents, staff, partners, businesses and visitors, keep them better informed and involved so that they can better influence the quality and nature of Council services in South Derbyshire.

10.0 Background Papers

- 10.1 Corporate Communications Strategy 2010-2014
<http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/comms/folder.2009-04-14.0525912252/corpcomms2010-2015>

Corporate Communications Strategy Action Plan 2010 – 2011

Action	Why	Lead	Timescale	Key measures of success
Incorporate the LGComms Reputation Project into our Corporate Communications Strategy.	To focus on enhancing the Council's reputation as the public service leader in South Derbyshire.	Communications Officer Consultation Policy Officer	September 2010	Report to be submitted to Finance & Management Committee. Annual Report on performance.
Develop corporate campaigns linked to the delivery of the key priorities within the Corporate Plan.	To target and evaluate all communications activities to show how the corporate vision is being achieved.	Communications Officer	March 2011	Eight campaigns completed and evaluated. Performance measured in line with key PIs for each campaign.
Co-ordinate nominations for national awards.	To recognise the exceptional and inspired work of the Council.	Communications Officer Internal Officers	On going	Applications submitted on time.
Further develop internal communications to add to the dialogue with staff during a time of change and economic restraint.	To keep staff informed so that they can act as advocates and ambassadors. To reduce uncertainty in a time of change and financial restrictions.	Communications Officer Communications Asst Graphic Designer Web Editor	March 2011	Enhancing 'better' and Corporate blogs to increase employee satisfaction with 'better' to be measured by the internal communications survey. Creating an efficient mechanism for relaying corporate messages to Members and staff.
Increase the reputation of the Council through increased coverage in a variety of media.	To promote the work of the Council to the widest possible audience.	Communications Officer Communications Asst Web Editor	On going	Increased positive coverage in local, specialist and national media. Evidenced through monthly report.

Action	Why	Lead	Timescale	Key measures of success
To provide training for Elected Members and Officers in media communications.	To develop individual skills and knowledge to improve personal effectiveness in media issues.	Communications Asst Communications Officer Training & Development Officer	March 2011	To increase the number of media confident spokespeople to represent the work of the Council.
Work with the South Derbyshire Partnership and other public sector providers to promote partnership projects.	To inform local residents of all the public services that are available within the District.	Communications Officer Communications Asst Partners	On going	To establish a joint approach for communications activities. Contribution to targets in Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-29.
Continue to manage corporate identity, visual branding and production of high-end publications.	To ensure that the Council's visual image is consistent in style and quality and promotes the services we provide.	Communications Officer Graphic Designer	March 2011	Enhanced reputation by building a recognisable identity and consistent brand. All publications compliant with branding guidelines.
To proactively promote the design process amongst service areas.	To encourage pre-planning of design work by staff alongside our main communications.	Graphic designer	March 2011	Reduction in design change and amendments. Feedback from users.
Visually re-interpret corporate information and performance information is displayed internally.	Increased interest and understanding of corporate messages by staff.	Graphic Designer	Ongoing	Redesigned process implemented. Information displayed on quarterly basis.
Design a corporate backdrop for external notice boards.	Increased awareness in community events and activities by residents.	Graphic Designer	December 2010	Backdrop reflects branding requirements. Feedback from users.

Action	Why	Lead	Timescale	Key measures of success
Publicise leisure activities weekly through the Burton Mail and on the Google calendar. Produce three full colour 'What's On' guides each year.	To increase the uptake of leisure, health, sport and cultural activities, and tourism within the District.	Media Specialist Web Editor Graphic Designer	On-going	To encourage healthier communities, inward investment and a vibrant economy. Information produced on a timely basis.
Produce an Annual Report for South Derbyshire	To ensure that the people of South Derbyshire are aware of the Council's achievements.	Communications Officer Communications Asst Graphic Designer	June 2011	Third Annual Report is produced showing how we have delivered on the Corporate Plan priorities.
Use a wide variety of methods to highlight the work of the Council.	To promote satisfaction with the Council through its front facing services.	Heads of Service Communications Asst Web Editor	Ongoing	Baseline to be re-established using either national framework or local measures of satisfaction.
Provide details of public and Council meetings through the Google calendar.	To promote local democracy.	Web Editor	Ongoing	Increased resident participation in the decision-making process.
Support Area Forums.	To empower local residents to talk directly to Council Members and Officers.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services Corporate Policy & Communications Manager	Ongoing	Continued development of Area Forums as a method of talking with and feeding back to the people of South Derbyshire.
Make the Council's website compliant with accessibility standards and the hub of all information about South Derbyshire.	To ensure a high level of public understanding of the Council and its services.	Web Editor Graphic Designer Communications Officer	Ongoing	Maintaining our website performance level through the SOCTIM annual survey. Feedback from users of website.

Action	Why	Lead	Timescale	Key measures of success
Develop new e-communication methods to add to social marketing to diverse audiences.	Make use of new technology to communicate with our residents.	Web Editor IT Communications Officer	March 2011	Increase in use of e-communications in our campaigns. Feedback from users
Use the website to consult with our stakeholders and as a mechanism of providing feedback.	To ensure that we use the website as a two-way channel of communication	Web Editor Policy Officer (Consultation) Communications Officer	March 2011	Feedback from consultation used to establish baseline.
Encourage the use of "Making it plain", the Council's plain English guidance.	To ensure that all written material, including the copy produced for the design process is clear, jargon free and reviewed for compliance with plain English principles	Web Editor Communications Officer Communications Asst Graphic Designer All staff	Ongoing	All presented material is provided in plain English.
Provide communications support for any consultation work undertaken as part of the Consultation Strategy.	To ensure that a range of communication activities are used to maximise the response to any consultation activity.	Communications Asst Policy Officer (Consultation)	Ongoing	Joint working continued on key consultation projects. Outcomes measured on each project.