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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 11</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>30 APRIL 2009</b>	<b>CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>MARTIN GUEST EXT 8705</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2009-2014</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That Corporate Communications Strategy 2009–2014 and action plan are approved. The action plan is shown at **appendix 1** and the Communication Strategy is available on the intranet click on the following link;  
<http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/comms/folder.2009-04-14.0525912252/>
- 1.2 That an annual report is submitted to this Committee to inform on progress against the action plan and delivery of the Corporate Communications Strategy.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To present a Corporate Communications Strategy for the Council that supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan through the effective alignment of resources towards key priorities and objectives. This will promote and enhance the reputation of the Council not only within the local community but also within the public sector and nationally.
- 2.2 To provide an overview of the progress on actions that were approved for the previous and highlight the key priorities for the coming year.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Corporate Communications Strategy provides a focus for the communication activities of the Council in fulfilling the priorities for the people of South Derbyshire outlined in the Corporate Plan 2009-2014.
- 3.2 Corporate communications covers the full range of media management, publications, external and internal communications. Through targeting our communications activities the Council can continue to enhance its reputation and profile at a local and national level. Good corporate communications can encourage people to feel positively about the Council because they are better informed, have higher levels of satisfaction and know that they are getting value for money. This report outlines how this will be achieved from 2009-2014.

#### **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 Every communication process is based on consulting, listening, acting, informing and evaluating the impact on the targeted audiences.
- 4.2 The Corporate Communications Strategy should be read alongside the Consultation Strategy so that it can be tested on its impact on its audiences.
- 4.3 This will be the first Communication Strategy that has been put in place following the centralisation of resources into a central team. The Director of Corporate Services took this initiative with external support provided from Westminster City Council which is recognised as having an excellent track record in communications. A full review was undertaken on existing levels of service and Members of this Committee accepted a final proposal in September 2008. The central Communication Team was established from 1 December 2008.

#### ***Achievements 2008-2009***

- 4.4 The new Communications Team has brought together the skills of media management, internal and external communications, new media, the website, the intranet and graphic design. Based within the Organisational Development Unit it enables the specialists in communications to work alongside officers expert in consultation and corporate policy and priorities.
- 4.5 Already the effectiveness of the once disparate team being brought together can be seen in the first Annual Report that has been developed by the Council. Other successes include the completion of an annual programme for the weekly promotion of the activities of Leisure and Community Services along with the co-ordination and subsequent publication of the Corporate Plan. Corporate guidelines to protect and promote the Council's brand are in place.
- 4.6 Work has commenced on the development of a structured approach to campaigns that will support the delivery of key priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2009-2014. A first trial of this was completed at Christmas and the outcomes have shown that the approach proposed will realise a number of benefits for the Council.
- 4.7 The Council's website has been assessed as being in the top 20 websites within local government. An excellent achievement and work has commenced in partnership with Derbyshire County Council to migrate onto a new platform and continue to enhance the functionality of the Council's website.
- 4.8 An employee survey has been completed and internal focus group established to review the outcome and provide another opportunity for two way communication for the workforce.

#### ***Priorities 2009/10***

- 4.9 A revised action plan can be found in the Corporate Communications Strategy. This details the key priorities for the Communications Team over the coming year.

- 4.10 A key priority is to develop a structured approach to developing campaigns with in the Council. This was a key recommendation from the review completed on communications. The Corporate Communications Strategy focuses on key messages from the new Corporate Plan 2009-2014, formulated into well-researched campaigns with monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of our actions. Communications work will be more planned and targeted; it is proactive rather than reactive.
- 4.11 Campaigns aim to change behaviour or perceptions to enhance the reputation of the Council. Campaigns are a linked series of activities to achieve a specific goal. The Communications Team works closely with all services that have their priorities set within the Corporate Plan. Campaigns, through reinforcement and repetition, turn information into messages for the widest audience. A template for completing campaigns can be found in the Corporate Communications Strategy document.
- 4.12 To link the communication activity of the Council, where appropriate, with the Local Strategic Partnership and other public service providers such as the NHS. This will help inform residents in the District of all the public services that operate within South Derbyshire and enhance the sense of place and community.
- 4.13 Success of the Communication Strategy will be measured in numerous ways. This includes general satisfaction surveys, improvements in service delivery and can now also be measured through the Place Survey that focuses on partnerships and the quality of life rather than a simple satisfaction with services. With the Communications team now in place, the Council is in a position to co-ordinate and target communication activities for the community and play a leading role in delivering improvements.

## 5.0 **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 While resources are limited, people's expectations continue to rise and so we must ensure that we are targeting our communications in a cost-effective and timely manner.
- 5.2 Through managing the Council's reputation we can seek to attract resources through sponsorship, funding and inward investment.
- 5.3 All activities will be funded from existing resources.

## 6.0 **Employment Implications**

- 6.1 The Communications Team is now fully staffed. Whilst it is a new Team, it is expected that they will deliver on the key priorities within the action plan.

## 7.0 **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Our Communication Strategy establishes the way that we will carry out targeted and timely communications for the community. Effective and inclusive communications are a vital support for the Council's core values. By focusing on the Corporate Plan, members of the public and staff can be made aware of the Council's commitment to improve the quality of life for the people of South Derbyshire.
- 7.2 Good communication is essential for a local authority to fulfil its duty to engage effectively with local residents, staff, businesses, visitors and stakeholders. True

communication needs to be a two way process with the Council enabling its audiences to express their views and opinions, as well as providing information to keep them well informed of the latest news and developments.

- 7.3 By enhancing the Council's reputation we can work to ensure that we can recruit and retain the best and most committed staff. The importance of effective engagement with our current workforce is critical to ensure that they are able to inform and influence the delivery of services for the community.

## 8.0 **Community Implications**

- 8.1 Providing services must be matched by promoting services so that the people who need to use them know about them. It also helps to ensure that those who pay for services can be assured that their money is well spent and that the Council demonstrates value for money.

- 8.2 Through targeted communications we can also continue to improve our reputation and research has proved that the better informed people are, the more satisfied they are with their Council.

## 9.0 **Conclusions**

- 9.1 Through its Corporate Communications Strategy, the Council exemplifies its commitment that residents, staff, partners, businesses and visitors should all be better informed and regularly consulted so that they can influence the quality and nature of services available to them.

## 10.0 **Background papers**

- 10.1 Exempt reports detailing the review of Corporate Communications to Finance & Management Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

## Corporate Communications Strategy Action Plan 2009 - 2014

<b>Action</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Targets</b>
Complete review of Corporate Communication Strategy	To assess the impact of the Strategy and ensure it remains appropriate for the needs of the Council	Communications Officer Consultation Policy Officer	April 2009	Report to be submitted to Finance & Management Committee April 2009.
Develop communications campaigns linked to the delivery of the key priorities within the Corporate Plan	To target and evaluated all communications activities to show how the corporate vision is being achieved	Communications Officer	April 2010	5 external campaigns completed and evaluated 3 internal campaigns completed and evaluated
Continue to review and develop the A-Z Guide of Services.	To give clear information on the Council's services and how to access them.	Communications Officer Web Editor	March 2010	Review current content and ensure it remains valid and up to date.
Review application of Corporate Identity guidelines	To ensure consistency and clarity of Corporate image and communication of key messages.	Communications Officer Graphic Designer	March 2010	Complete launch of revised guidelines planned for April 2009.
Review the Council's Media Protocol	To promote awareness and understanding of media requirements.	Communications Officer	March 2010	Complete review and publish revised media protocol. Promote and provide training as required.

Create a corporate digital image resource library	To catalogue high quality, permitted, copyrighted and relevant images from various sources across the Council for use in publications, the website and intranet which reflect the Council's vision, values, themes and priorities	Graphic Designer	March 2010	Provide a stock of effective and attractive images
Continue to work with service areas, print providers and external contractors to ensure that the correct application of the Corporate Design Guidelines underpins the creative elements of all visual media	To ensure a balance between consistent branding and creative solutions to each project	Graphic Designer	On going	Effective branding on all communications materials
Liaise with Leisure and Community Services to ensure that projects supported by partnership initiatives across South Derbyshire are clearly branded as such	To increase awareness of the District and our strong partnership initiatives	Graphic Designer, Communications Officer, Head of Leisure and Community Services	On going	Clear branding on publicity materials

Raise the profile of the Council through increased coverage in different media	To promote the work of the Council to the widest possible audience	Communications Officer	Ongoing	Development of key performance indicator to be used to evaluate outcomes of work completed.
Introduce and promote a combined annual report and performance plan	To communicate the Council's approach to performance, value for money, its corporate plan priorities and achievements.	Head of Organisational Development Corporate Policy & Communications Manager	June 2009	Second Annual report complete and published.
Link the Councils' communication activity where appropriate with the LSP and other public sector providers.	To inform local residents of all the public services that are available within the District	Head of Organisational Development Communications Officer	July 2009	To establish a joint approach for communications activities.
Use a wide variety of methods to publicise the Customer Service Standards e.g. posters, team briefing.	To help embed a customer ethos.	Head of Customer Services	Ongoing	Continue to review effectiveness of materials to promote standards for Customers.
Ensure that the Council's website is constantly updated with news, information about services and articles of interest to customers.	To ensure a high level of public understanding of the Council and its services.	Communications Officer Wed Editor	Ongoing	Work with Derbyshire County Council to migrate to new platform. Maintain appropriate industry standards required accessibility Content is reviewed and updated on regular basis

Encourage the use of plain English for all Council publications.	To ensure that all written material is clear, jargon free and reviewed for compliance with plain English principles	Communications Officer Web Editor	Ongoing	Corporate material to be reviewed by Communication Team
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 Officer Policy Officer (Consultation)	Ongoing	Joint working continued on key consultation projects. Outcomes measured on each project.
Support Area Meetings.	To empower local residents to talk directly to Council Members and Officers.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services Corporate Policy & Communications Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing review of Area meetings and feedback from members of the public.
Ensure the Council's website is compliant with internationally recognised accessibility standards.	To ensure the website can be accessed by anyone using assistive technology.	Communications Officer Web Editor	Ongoing	To be reviewed following changes to new website. Ongoing assessment to be undertaken with services users
Develop new e-communication methods	Make use of new technology to communicate with our residents.	Communications Officer Web Editor	Ongoing	Develop and implement the use of different media technologies such as Flickr and Twitter.
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.	Communications Officer Consultation Policy Officer Web Editor	Ongoing	Consultations carried out as part of the development of the new website

Undertake a staff survey.	To gauge employee satisfaction, measure progress and listen to new ideas.	Head of Organisational Development Consultation Policy Officer.	March 2010	Employee focus group to be established and take forward outcomes. Complete Employee survey during 2009/10
Develop guidelines for team meetings	To encourage feedback and sharing of core values	Head of Organisational Development Communications Officer	March 2010	Complete initial proposals. Actions to be progressed during 2009/10
Explore mechanisms for celebrating success and spreading good practice via team briefing etc.	Develop Team Meeting Guidelines	Communications Officer Communication Asst	June 2009	Team briefing notes expanded Internal communications to be refocused on more effective two way communications through a corporate blog and emagazine
Monitor the intranet by usage and produce a development plan for continued improvement.	To ensure staff are aware of good practice and success is shared	Head of IT and Business Improvement Web Editor	July 2009	Revised intranet developed and launched.
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 Officer Training & Development Officer	March 2010	Support and training as required. Outcomes measured through personal reflection and evaluation.