

Internal Communications Strategy 2016-2018

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Version Control

Version	Description of version	Effective Date
1	First version of Internal Communications Strategy	September 2016

Approvals

Approved by	Date

Associated Documentation

Description of Documentation
Communications Strategy

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of the Internal Communications Strategy is to identify the way forward for engaging and communicating with employees and Elected Members. This document sets out the aims, aspirations, channels and the action plan to achieve this.

Overall, our internal communications efforts must unite our team members, create a sense of pride and instil our values. Activity must also reflect the aims of the Corporate Plan 2016-2021 and demonstrate the part that team members play.

Effective communication at all levels, within teams, between teams, and between staff, senior management and Elected Members is crucial in making this a natural process.

The benefits of good internal communications:

- Increased passion for, commitment to and alignment with SDDC's strategies and goals
- A motivated working environment with increased productivity and good morale
- Creates a sense of loyalty and pride
- Staff and Elected Members become brand ambassadors
- Attracts new people to join the organisation which increases trust in the organisation and leads to higher retention rates
- Creates a community at the workplace and not just a workforce
- Improves customer experience and loyalty.

2.0 Looking back

The 2014-16 Internal Communications Strategy set out ambitious plans for improving internal communications. Some of these actions have been achieved and others are still in progress. The most ambitious of the plans was to reinvent the intranet to create a 'one-stop-shop' for news and information. During this time period the new intranet was planned, produced and launched. The intranet offers a brand-new design, platform for growth, access to shared documents and rolling-news feed. Due to the complexity of the project, phase two will be moved into the 2016-18 strategy.

In early 2016 Better magazine moved online and now all content is posted on the intranet directly, allowing staff to access news as-it-happens.

Blogging was reintroduced with the re-launch of the intranet in 2015. However, 2016 survey results suggest they are not as effective as they could be with low ratings for relevance and easy access.

Other areas to be continued in the 2016-18 strategy include defining email usage and refreshing noticeboards.

3.0 Current position

With the increasing emphasis on empowering team members through employee communications and engagement and the introduction of the Corporate Plan 2016-21, it is timely to address a new way forward.

The current channels include team briefs, face-to-face, email, Better Online and noticeboards. To understand the quality of these channels an internal communications audit was conducted. This

survey aimed to get qualitative and quantitative data from team members to support the creation of this strategy. A summary of the results are here:

Overall

- The survey was completed by 55 team members from across all departments of the Council, compared to 103 in 2014.
- 91% of people said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with internal communications overall, compared to 75% in 2014.
- Better Online (the Intranet) and Email were rated the most informative channels. Better Magazine, face to face and team briefs ranked highest in 2014.

Better Online (The Intranet)

- 58% of people said they accessed Better Online at least weekly compared to 55% of people who regularly viewed the Intranet in 2014.
- 39% of people said they rarely access Better Online compared to 44% in 2014.
- The most highly rated functions/features of Better Online are 'accessing and reading news items' and 'accurate content'.
- The lowest rated functions/features of Better Online are 'reading blogs', 'navigating around Better Online' and 'using the search feature'.
- 60% of people said they would like a regular email to tell them what's new on Better Online.
- 70% of people didn't know how to get their news published on Better Online.

Corporate Plan and Values

- When launching the Corporate Plan, the most seen promotion channels included posters around the building, articles on Better Online and Frank's Blog.
- 72.9% of staff say they feel informed about the Corporate Plan
- When asked how well they understand the Corporate Plan, 44% of people said 'not very well' and 10% said 'not at all'. 12 people skipped the question.
- When it comes to living our values, people rated 'putting residents first' as the highest and 'act decisively' and 'be driven by economy, effectiveness and efficiency' as the lowest
- 68% of people said they felt either 'highly informed' or 'informed' about SDDC's values
- When asked about internal communications and its effectiveness, people rated 'I can talk knowledgeably with customers' with the highest satisfaction score
- When asked about internal communications and its effectiveness, people rated 'I feel staff are recognised and celebrated for top performance' with the lowest satisfaction score

Content

- 65% of people said they felt 'informed' about staff success stories
- 64% of people said they are 'not very informed' or 'not informed at all' about HR updates
- 57% of people are 'not very informed' or 'not informed at all' about career opportunities.

Email

- Feedback suggests occasional compatibility issues with emails not created in HTML
- 88% of people said they receive a lot of emails but either find it manageable or don't have any problems

- Some comments included too much 'junk' email being sent
- Corporate emails need to include more links to the intranet and where to find documents online – rather than just saying they can be found online
- Emails could be targeted so it's easier to pick out specific topics

Noticeboards

- General feedback suggested noticeboards are not kept up-to-date by departments
- People would like to see more information about who does what in each department

Team brief

- General feedback suggested that the current mixture of topics is suitable and relevant including HR, staff successes and performance information
- Feedback suggested more consistency is required across the Council regarding who receives a team brief and how it is distributed.

4.0 Industry trends and influence

To make robust and realistic recommendations, external trends and influences must be considered alongside the audit results.

According to various sources, including the Institute of Internal Communication, there are six top trends to consider in the modern day organisation:

- The digital workplace
- Collaboration
- Leadership and strategic narrative
- Inspiring and engaging content
- Employee ambassadors
- Omni-channel

What do these mean to us?

The digital workplace - As the world of work changes to increase the use of different technology, mobile working and new devices, the way we offer access to business information and news must adapt too. Some of these channels may be well into the future for SDDC but there are some steps we can take now from a communications perspective. Better Online (the intranet) has undergone a re-launch with phase two potentially offering extra features such as room bookings and additional online forms. As we embark on delivering a new website solution for customers we also need to engage with staff on the new solution and raise the profile of digital communication.

Collaboration – In the broadest sense this is about creating an environment to share ideas and work together between departments. Our role as a Communications Team is to provide the tools and to recognise and share success when collaboration happens. In terms of Better Online, this may be the ability to add comments on documents and additional sharing features.

Leadership and strategic narrative – The role of internal communications in this area is ultimately to ensure staff know where the organisation is heading, its goals and aspirations. We can do this by 'telling the story' of SDDC, showcasing the Corporate Plan, celebrating successes through various channels and keeping staff and Elected Members informed and engaged on issues relevant to

them. We also play a part in assisting managers and the leadership team to cascade messages and the direction of the organisation.

Inspiring and engaging content – Creating content that inspires and engages staff and Elected Members is very much part of what we do. As well as crafting stories we must use the right mix of channels for our audiences, including new channels or methods such as video, audio and graphics.

Employee ambassadors – Also known as brand advocates, these staff are actively involved in SDDC, passionate about what they do and feel empowered to represent SDDC. Our role is to keep them informed, provide feedback mechanisms where relevant and recognise their success stories.

Omni-channel – Our role in achieving this is to provide the right message, in the right way, to the right people, at the right time. It's also about using a combination of channels to deliver the information to staff and Elected Members. Using information from the internal communications survey will help identify the channels that work best and what for.

5.0 The future

Our vision is to develop and implement high-quality internal communications through a variety of channels. Ultimately all internal communications activities must instil the SDDC values and vision of the Corporate Plan through creative, engaging and personal communication. Our aim is to make staff feel part of an organisation that makes them feel proud, involved, informed and celebrated.

6.0 Objectives

SDDC strategic communication priorities 2016-18

- Embed the Corporate Plan 2016-21 and ensure that team members understand their role in delivering our vision.
- Work with Directorates to identify and execute key internal communication campaigns and actions to deliver the Corporate Plan.
- Deliver and consider actions from the Communications Strategy 2016-21 to ensure strong relationships exist between external and internal communication activities.
- Work with the leadership team to ensure communication plans are in place for change programmes, business improvements and projects that affect all staff.
- Develop a council-wide team brief that allows questions and feedback to be shared between directorates and up and down the communication chain.

Communication objectives

- Provide relevant communications tools and templates to improve the flow of communication between the leadership team and staff to ensure team members understand key messages and the impact of them.
- Define and promote the internal communication channels available, including the purpose and audience for each channel.
- Increase use of Better Online by educating users, developing new features and promoting content to users.
- Explore ways to improve the content shared with staff, including HR updates, the SDDC values and employee survey results.

- Review and develop methods to best engage those without access to email and the Intranet.

Key messages

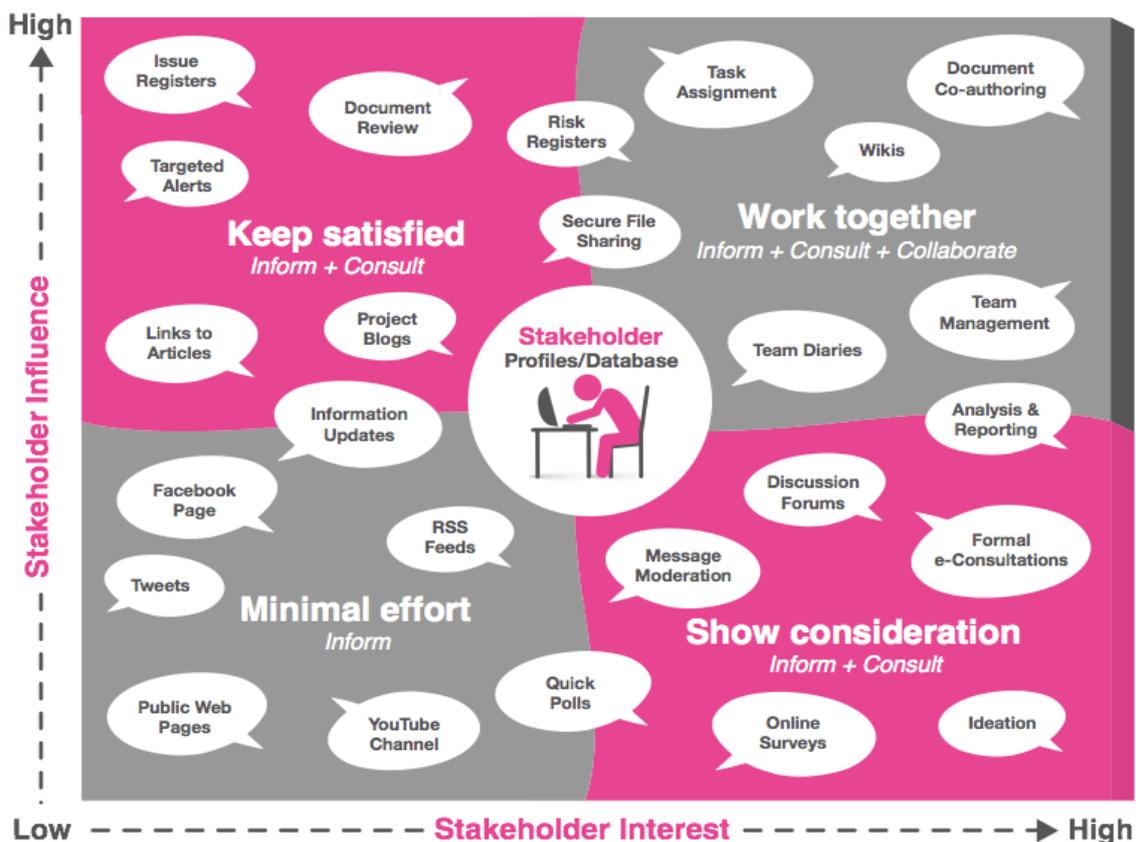
- Our team members are valued and trusted professionals
- Working to our values is vital to our success
- Communication is everyone’s responsibility
- The Corporate Plan is our vision for the next five years.
- The Corporate Plan themes are People, Place, Progress and Outcomes
- Making South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit
- South Derbyshire: changing for the better
- Celebrate success and recognise progress
- Performance reporting is positive and enables continuous improvement.

7.0 Stakeholders

Messages should be tailored to suit our audience, in language that they understand so that they are clear about what it means for them. We need to think about the best way of reaching them and consider if the message is relevant. Our stakeholders are:

- SDDC and NPS Employees – office and non office based
- Elected Members

For more complex communication requirements the following [Stakeholder Map example](#) shows how which channels we may use to engage with specific groups.



Stakeholder mapping should be considered for complex issues or long-term projects as a tool to help understand who to communicate with and how.

8.0 Channels

We use a variety of internal communication channels. These offer different outcomes; awareness, understanding, acceptance, commitment and ownership. A combination of channels should be used based on these desired outcomes.

	Awareness	Understanding	Acceptance	Commitment	Ownership
Current	Intranet stories Emails Posters Newsletters	Line manager briefings Face-to-face Intranet stories Newsletters Forums	Blogs by peers Story telling Personal objectives 1-1s	Story-telling 1-1s Personal objectives	Story telling Personal objectives
Potential future additions	Video	Social forums Workshops	FAQs	Workshops	Internal social media Workshops

Channel	Purpose at SDDC
Video	How-to videos, promotion, awareness, share success
Better Online (Intranet)	Central hub for news, information, sharing, blogs, forums
Email	Emergencies, corporate messages, signposting, not for social
Posters	Corporate, events, health and safety, performance, staff success
Face to face	Meetings, briefings, 1-1s, adhoc, focus groups
Events/workshops	Demos, feedback, presentations
FAQs	Explanation of issues or changes
Internal social media	Sharing best practice, sharing content

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

Communication is everyone’s responsibility. This chart identifies the key roles and responsibilities:

Who	Responsibility
Communications Team	Overall responsibility for creating content and managing and developing the communication channels available. Responsible for crafting messages and advising the Council on ways to communicate key messages.
Chief Executive/Directors	Responsible for cascading messages for wider communication to Communications Team. Also responsible for face-to-face communication with their teams.
Managers	Responsible for cascading messages and success stories for wider communications to the Communications Team. Also responsible for face-to-face communication with their teams and providing staff feedback to Directors.

Officers and other staff	Providing feedback to managers, asking questions, sharing ideas and success stories.
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10.0 Measurement and evaluation

Measuring and evaluating the success of internal communications campaigns and activity is highly important. This enables us to review what went well, what didn't work so well and how we can improve in the future.

The overall measure of success will be to deliver the actions that form the internal communications action plan (details on the following page). This action plan will be reviewed annually and will be updated to reflect changes and new requirements. To complement this review an annual internal communications survey will be completed by staff to assess the delivery of the action plan and the overall internal communications strategy objectives. This survey will then be used to make recommendations and form a new annual action plan.

The internal communications strategy will be reviewed every two years and updated accordingly.

In order to regularly monitor internal communications activity the following methods will be used:

- Quarterly internal communications review
 - Better Online statistics
 - Better Online email hits
 - Number of internal communications emails issued from Communications and number of hits
 - Blog hits

- Temperature check/impact surveys
 - Following or throughout campaigns we may ask a sample of people a series of short questions to evaluation the effectiveness of the campaign. These results will be used to make changes to the campaign or future campaigns if required.

11.0 Conclusion

In summary, the Internal Communications Strategy and action plan will enable us to develop the channels already established, expand our offer and raise the profile of internal communications within SDDC.

Our aspiration is to improve the variety of channels, define their purpose and provide managers, Elected Members and officers with the tools to communicate in an engaging, easy and creative way.

We aim to trial and test new methods as well improve existing channels such as the intranet, email and noticeboards.

Through the content we produce and the stories shared by staff we want to continue to celebrate success, promote the positive work completed in the Corporate Plan, embed the core themes and demonstrate the values of SDDC.

12.0 Action Plan and Timeline

Communication plans

Communications plans will be devised and adapted throughout the course of this strategy. These plans help to identify key messages and actions to take.

Targets

- Increase overall satisfaction with internal communications by 2018 (currently 91%)
- Increase the number of people who understand the Corporate Plan to 75% by 2018
- Increase number of visits to Better Online by 20% by 2018

Action Plan

Channel/Area	Task	Issue addressed	Who	When
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct up to three focus groups with staff to better understand feedback on Better Online and the Corporate Plan. • Define use of focus groups in the future. 	Better understand communications requirements for larger projects, changes or campaigns.	All	Dec 2016
Better Online (the Intranet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the rebrand of Better Online and the features available • Develop fortnightly/monthly overview of stories • Run refresher training for Superusers • Investigate creation of new team directory • Research and trial use of forums, social features and comments using products such as Stack. • Increase use of blogs and introduce more informal style of blogging • Introduce new look meet the team feature • Increase use of video, images and graphics • Review the design, branding, structure and taxonomy to ensure Better Online is fit for purpose • Improve the use of keywords and improve the search facility • Set up regular reporting mechanism to track progress • Research methods for online room bookings • Develop online forms where relevant 	Addressing survey feedback and issues raised such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the search feature • increase awareness of rebrand • blogs were rated low but previously rated highly. 	All	Dec 2017

Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop internal email templates using Mailchimp or similar Develop email best practice/code, including definition of who sends corporate emails and removing personal emails Introduce central communications inbox Develop new email signatures and introduce consistency 	<p>Enable staff to pick out key messages from inboxes.</p> <p>Consistency between HTML and other emails.</p>	All	Aug 2017
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of video and animation to engage with staff for sharing news and how-to do something 	Introduces something new that will staff to intranet.	All	Aug 2017
Print/Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold branding amnesty/review Revise all corporate branding templates Launch new brand guidelines and templates Research external branding options Launch to bring consistency Create posters to promote values and Corporate Plan 	<p>Improves consistency across Council.</p> <p>Builds on launch of Corporate Plan.</p>	All All All All All All	Aug 2017 Aug 2018 Aug 2017 Aug 2018 Aug 2017 Complete
Team brief document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a council-wide team brief to be shared between directorates and up and down the communication chain. Revise team brief document to reflect new branding and Corporate Plan Revise timetable and publication process 	Feedback suggests not all business areas receive a team brief document.	All	Aug 2017
1-1s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update 1-1 form to reflect new branding and Corporate Plan Launch new form to team members Work with HR to set guidelines for internal communications and 1-1s 	To demonstrate links between 1-1s and Corporate Plan.	All	Dec 2016
Corporate plan and performance framework reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and deliver communications plan to increase awareness of Corporate Plan and performance monitoring Promote performance success stories on noticeboards and Better Online Work with Directorates to identify and execute key internal communication 	Feedback was positive for Corporate Plan launch but a high percentage of people said they didn't understand the plan and many didn't name the themes.	All	Aug 2017

	campaigns and actions to deliver the Corporate Plan			
Noticeboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete audit of all noticeboards and review ownership • Review suitable content and issue guidelines to owners 	Noticeboards received mixed reviews – useful but only when they are updated.	ALL	Aug 2017
Employee Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise profile of Employee Forum • Share information and outcomes from Employee Forum via relevant communication channels 	Feedback suggested that some people were unaware of the forum. Those that were aware didn't know the outcomes.	ALL	Dec 2016
HR and Career opportunity updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with HR and devise actions for sharing vacancies and relevant HR information 	Rated as least informed about HR and career opportunities.	ALL	August 2017