

Report To: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 15 May 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member for Customers and Communities/
Had of Communications, Marketing and Leisure

Report Author: Team Leader – Communications and Campaign
Management

Title: Corporate Communications Strategy

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The report is about the current Corporate Communications Strategy and identifying a way forward for the next 12 months.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 To update members of Communities Scrutiny Committee on progress made with the Communications Strategy Action Plan (Year 1), to identify objectives for Year 2 and to agree a protocol on communication with Members.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 To note and comment on the progress made in the Year 1 Action Plan.

3.2 To identify any issues for inclusion in the Year 2 Action Plan.

3.3 To provide observations and support the attached protocol on communicating with Members, **pending approval, from the Senior Leadership Team.**

4. Report details.

4.1 In early 2013, Cabinet approved a three year Corporate Communications Strategy for the Council.

4.2 Cabinet agreed the key principles of the Strategy and agreed that an Action Plan should be produced every 12 months, to address any emerging issues or the opportunity to tailor the Communications Strategy, to utilise any new technological developments.

4.3 The Year 1 Action Plan is drawing to a conclusion and it is timely to reflect on the success of the Strategy and to identify new communications objectives for the Council.

4.4 Since the Corporate Communications Strategy was agreed in 2013, the Council has restructured its Communications and Marketing functions, with the

aim of having a robust organisational structure that is best placed to meet the communications and marketing demands defined within the Corporate Plan.

- 4.5 The new Destination, Marketing and Communications team, which includes tourism, marketing, major events, corporate communications and the Welsh Language has resulted in a more focussed workforce, better directed to deliver corporate priorities, working coherently across services with particular focus on regeneration, economic development, business support and tourism.
- 4.6 The Council needs to adopt a proactive approach to marketing and communication and keep under constant review the means by which it communicates, so that audiences are informed about the services the Council offers and to ensure that services meet the needs of residents and visitors.
- 4.7 As a result, a key focus for the new department is the creation of a Marketing Strategy for Denbighshire, but it is recognised that there is a need for an overall Corporate Communications Strategy that will underpin all communications activity within the authority.
- 4.8 Clearly, there has been a shift in focus following the creation of the new Destination, Marketing and Communications Team.
- 4.9 However, the majority of the improvement actions identified in the Strategy have been progressed, including:
 - Arranging the Council's presence at the National Eisteddfod of Wales.
 - New council branding and design
 - Clear suite of templates for corporate literature, presentation and council papers.
 - The use of social media to promote the Council's work and activities
 - Development of Customer Charter standards so that customers know what kind of service they can expect from the Council.
 - Workstreams emerging from the corporate priorities.
 - Revamp of the corporate website
 - Further development of internal communications
 - Development of an Events Strategy
 - Targeted marketing campaigns agreed by the Council, Dog Fouling, Fostering, Best Council in Wales, Love Rhyl
 - County-wide audit of the Welsh Language.
- 4.10 The Council has also continued to enhance its media relations activities, with a total of 230 news releases issued in the past six months. 80% of the publicity received has been positive, the majority relating to news releases issued by the Council.
- 4.11 There are a number of emerging areas of work that will need addressing and an Action Plan is currently being prepared for Year 2. These issues include:
 - Developing a Digital Marketing Strategy
 - Embedding the Accounts Management process

- Development of internal communications
 - Implementation of the Welsh Language Standards
 - Enhancing our Emergency Planning capabilities.
 - Implementing the Events Strategy.
 - Communications about the modernisation programme
 - Communication around major events
 - Further development of media relations(local, regional and specialist)
- 4.12 The team will be working with services to be more proactive with our communications (with officers and members), and as a result, will be more prepared to deal with issues emerging in the media. We will also be formalising a process for internal communications and the approvals process for signing off press releases.
- 4.13 The team will develop a toolkit / model of good practice to help services understand the communications challenges and the proactive approach the Council needs to take to issues that could potentially be contentious in the eyes of the public.
- 4.14 However, the Destination, Marketing and Communications team is eager to engage Members in helping to identify any issues that need to be included in the Year 2 Action Plan. The intention is to submit the Action Plan for consideration by the Cabinet in July.
- 4.15 One of the issues already raised by Members is the need for more effective communication between officers and Members. It is accepted that communication has generally improved across the board, but there are still examples where local Members are learning about Council activities through their local constituents.
- 4.16 To address this, a short protocol on communication between officers and Members has been drawn up. This document can be found in Appendix A.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1 The Communications Strategy and associated activities contribute to all the main corporate priorities for the Council, as well as addressing an overarching aim of enhancing and protecting the Council's reputation.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Any costs will be absorbed through the current Destination, Marketing and Communications budget.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

- 7.1 This report is for information only and no Equality Impact Assessment is needed at this stage.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 Consultation on the Year 1 Communications Strategy was carried out with Communities Scrutiny and Cabinet in 2013. Consultation will take place with a number of stakeholder groups prior to agreeing and implementing the Year 2 Action Plan.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 All costs will be contained within existing budgets

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations included in this paper. The risk of not communicating with residents and other stakeholders include damage to the Council's reputation and a risk of not communicating with residents on how to access Council services.

11. Power to make the Decision

Articles 6.3.2 (f) and 6.3.4(b) outline scrutiny's powers with respect to this matter.

Contact Officer:

Team Leader - Communications and Campaigns Management

Tel: 01824 706222

Protocol on communicating with Members

The Corporate Communications Strategy highlights the need for effective communications between officers and Members.

However, there are still examples of Members learning about issues affecting their wards directly from constituents, rather than through communications from Members.

To this end, the Council has drafted a short protocol on communicating with Members.

Officers must notify Members (by e-mail or telephone) of:

- Any contentious issues raised by constituents.
- Any local issues likely to generate positive or negative publicity
- Any events / site visits taking place in the ward.
- Any political/ Ministerial visits to the ward
- Any generic letter being distributed about a specific issue relating to a ward.
- Any potential investments / projects in the ward.
- Any positive or negative news releases / press interest pertaining to a specific ward.
- Any request for comment or interviews about an issue relating to a ward.
- Any photo opportunities taking place.

It would also be appropriate to alert the Destination, Marketing and Communications Team if you know of any of these issues, to identify any opportunities for positive promotion of the Council and its work.

For any advice relating to this issue, please contact the Destination, Marketing and Communications team on 6222.