

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 19 February 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Cllr Hugh Irving / Jamie Groves

Report Author: Gareth Watson, Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager

Title: Corporate Communications Strategy

1. What is the report about?

This reports sets out the Communications objectives for the authority for the next three years, with key sections around internal communications and engagement; Member communications, improving the Council's reputation and enhancing the corporate brand.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To highlight the approach to the Council's communications objectives and principles over the coming three years.

3. What are the Recommendations?

To approve the Corporate Communications Strategy and associated Action Plan for 2013.

4. Background

The Council is in the process of restructuring its Communications and Marketing functions. This restructure is aimed at having a robust organisational structure that is best placed to meet the demands defined within the Corporate Plan.

The new structure will also have 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.

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.

As a result, a key focus for the new department will be 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.

There are a number of other drivers for this Strategy:

- The Chief Executive's document, 'An Excellent Council Closer to the Community' outlines the need to become closer to the community. The Council needs to be a sector leader, known for its excellence and for using the resources to the best of its ability to provide the best possible services for residents. The Council needs to be clear about the standards of service people can expect from the Council and this needs communicating.
- The need for Members to become ambassadors for the Council. There needs to be greater consistency in how councillors communicate with business and community groups in their areas and they should be the first point of contact for constituents with any concerns.
- The financial position means we need to be smarter in the way we deliver and the need for effective communication is greater than ever before.
- Feedback from residents. The bi-annual residents survey highlight the need to keep residents informed about services available to them. We need to demonstrate to our residents that we will respond to them and we will listen.
- There is a need to strengthen internal communication activity, to ensure that staff have the right information and resources to deliver the best possible services, both internally and with external audiences.
- Improving links with town and community councils – better communication to enhance the Charter agreed between the Council and Town and Community Councils.

The Council also needs a co-ordinated Action Plan to address the future communication challenges of the authority: marketing council services; Destination Marketing; Major events - such as the National Eisteddfod of Wales 2013; Social media; Web development; Welsh Language policy development and the introduction of new standards set by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Key to the success of this is a change to the culture of the organisation. We want Staff and Members to feel a sense of pride in working for Denbighshire; proactively engage and communicate; co-ordinated the approach to internal communications and communicating with Members and continue to improve our relationship with town and community councils

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

Communications activities will be designed around the need to promote the corporate priorities by having a particular focus on communications around regeneration, economic development, business support and tourism. Specific communications plans will be drawn up around these key areas of work.

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

There will be a staffing resource to deliver this work and this is being addressed through the review of the Communications and Marketing functions of the authority.

The delivery of the Action Plan will require a change of focus in the current way of working of the Corporate Communications Team, together with individuals from the Customer Care team and directorate representatives responsible for communication. It will also involve commitment from all members of staff, to act as ambassadors for the authority.

Any costs arising from the communications activities will be absorbed through existing budgets.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

A group consisting of representatives from a number of relevant departments have been involved in drafting this strategy, including a representative of the Cabinet.

This report has previously been discussed by the Senior Leadership Team and by Cabinet Briefing.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no obvious significant financial implications contained within the report.

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

A lack of a co-ordinated approach to communication could lead to a lack of clarity of corporate message and this could lead to damage to the council's reputation.

To try and mitigate this risk, a series of awareness sessions will be arranged to ensure that staff are fully aware of the contents of the Corporate Communications Strategy, as well as their role in ensuring that it is successfully delivered.

10. Power to make the Decision

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 – subsidiary powers of local authorities.