

Review Title: Communications Review
Overview & Scrutiny Panel: Corporate Issues and Partnerships
Panel Chairman: Cllr. Martin Veal
Overview & Scrutiny Project Manager: Anna Burgess
Supporting Service Officers: Sarah Berry, Corporate Director Jonathan Mercer, Communications & Marketing Manager Julia Dean, Communications & Marketing Officer

Process for Tracking O&S Recommendations - Guidance note for Executive Members

The enclosed table lists all the recommendations arising from the above Overview & Scrutiny Review. Individual recommendations are referred to the relevant named Executive Members (or whole Executive in the case of a whole Executive referral) as listed in the '**Exec Member**' column of the table. In order to provide the O&S Panel with an Executive response on each recommendation, the named Executive member (or whole Executive) is asked to complete the last 3 columns of the table as follows:

Decision Response

The Executive has the following options:

- **Accept** the Panel's recommendation
- **Reject** the Panel's recommendation
- **Defer** a decision on the recommendation because a response cannot be given at this time. This could be because the recommendation needs to be considered in light of a future Executive decision, imminent legislation, relevant strategy development or budget considerations, etc.

Implementation Date

- For 'Accept' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be implemented.
- For 'Defer' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be reconsidered.
- For 'Reject' decisions this is not applicable so write n/a

Rationale

Use this space to explain the rationale for your decision response and implementation date. For accepted recommendations, please give details of how they will be implemented.

Communications Review: Recommendations

The Corporate Issues and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel firmly believe that to enhance the reputation of the Council greater emphasis needs to be placed on communicating effectively. To this end, **the Panel strongly urges the Executive Member to consider the following recommendations** to help improve the Council’s communication across the board and hence its reputation and trustworthiness.

Recommendation	Exec Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
<p>4.3 Raising the Profile of the Communications</p> <p>The Panel RECOMMENDS that</p> <p>4.3.1 Action be taken within the organisation to build awareness of Council communications, paying particular attention to the effects of unintentional communications</p>	Cllr Crossley	Accept	April 2005	This will be included as a key part of the communication strategy currently being developed. An awareness of good communications is essential if the Council is to build most effectively on good news whilst minimising opportunities for detrimental publicity. It will also help to raise awareness of press issues.
<p>4.3.2 Clear standards for communication with the public (style guides) are established for officers and Members and are applied across the whole Council, and that their effectiveness is evaluated through market research and other mechanisms as appropriate.</p>	Cllr Crossley	Accept	Ongoing	The Council currently has a range of standards and some style guidelines. These will be reviewed as part of the process of strengthening the Council’s brand and the communication strategy. This will also include style guidelines for services that work in partnership with other organisations. Monitoring the effectiveness of communications is a key part of developing a consultation strategy, which is currently being produced.
<p>4.3.3 Senior Council Officers and the Communications and Marketing Team review their processes so as to better capture “breaking news” e.g. via attendance at Directors Group and Heads</p>	Cllr Crossley	Accept	Jan 2005	The Communications and Marketing team will be reviewing all of its processes in January and February to maximise its effectiveness. The communications strategy due for completion by the end of December will

Recommendation	Exec Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
of Service Meetings and to position itself facilitate the rapid review and of outgoing communications				address the issue of capturing breaking news.
4.3.4 Council officers develop a more proactive approach to communication whereby service providers build sufficient time and resources into their processes to enable the production of high quality and timely press releases and other communications.	Cllr Crossley	Accept	April 2005	Forward planning of communications is essential if the Council is to maximise opportunities for proactive publicity. The communications strategy will focus strongly on the coordination of publicity across the Council and its links to other partnerships.
4.3.5 Improvements be made in the working relationship between the Council and the local news media through regular face to face meetings	Cllr Crossley	Accept	Immediate	<p>The Communications and Marketing manager has held a number of meeting with the media. The media have found these meetings helpful and these meetings will be scheduled in diaries on a regular basis. This is both a key performance measure to enable the Communications and Marketing team to monitor its performance and supports the building of stable relationships with editors and journalists alike.</p> <p>A key factor in improving the working relationship with the news media is the organisation of press briefings on key issues. This currently takes place and is seen as valuable by all parties concerned.</p>
<p>4.4 Maintaining and Improving Stylistic and Editorial Control</p> <p>The Panel RECOMMENDS that, in respect of communications from Services and Officers,</p> <p>4.4.1 “Communications and Marketing</p>	Cllr Crossley	Accept	April 2005	<p>The Communications and Marketing team are currently about to develop a set of brand guidelines for the whole organisation. This would include standards for both electronic and all printed communication.</p> <p>The communication strategy also being</p>

Recommendation	Exec Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
<p>should set guidelines and standards for all external printed and electronic communications. Communications requirements should be built into the staff core competencies currently being developed as part of the HR Improvement Project.”</p>				<p>developed will address the issue of core competencies and suggest areas where improvements might be needed and how these competencies could fit within the current improvement plans.</p>
<p>4.4.2 An audit of all Council communication to include internal, external and unintentional communication be undertaken that will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a baseline of precisely what and how the Council communicates across all media and how that compares with the other Councils within our audit family • establish how people wish to be contacted • evaluate the effectiveness of current communications methods • Produce proposals for improvements 	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>As part of developing the communication strategy an Audit of communications is being undertaken. This however will not include all communications due to time and resource constraints. However this will be completed as part of the branding processes over the coming year</p> <p>Research is being conducted during December with a cross section of local people to identify their views on Council communication to establish what people think of the Council’s communication processes and how effective they are. The aim is to feed the results into the draft communication strategy.</p> <p>Production of proposals for improvement will be included as part of an action plan contained with the communication strategy.</p>
<p>4.4.3 On the basis of the Communications Audit, a whole Council Communications Strategy should be developed which will lead to effort and resources being targeted in a way that promotes and protects the Council’s reputation with the public.</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>March 05</p>	<p>A draft communication strategy for the Council is currently being produced. A first draft will be produced by the end of December 04 and will be subject of consultation before it is finalised</p>

Recommendation	Exec Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
<p>4.4.4 Consideration be given to developing closer operational links between the Communications and Marketing Team and Linear Way Industries to improve stylistic control of printed media</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Both the Communications and Marketing Team and Linear Way will be Guardians of the Council’s stylistic designs and brand. This will ensure that there are closer operational links between both teams.</p>
<p>4.5 Improving the Accessibility of the Council</p> <p>The Panel strongly RECOMMENDS that steps be taken to use communication as a means of bringing the Council closer to the community so as to foster a sense of ownership. Actions to consider in achieving this goal include</p> <p>4.5.1 Actively seeking to use local venues, e.g. village halls for Council meetings</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Defer</p>	<p>Awaiting conclusion of Overview and Scrutiny on Council Meetings</p>	<p>Council Meetings are currently being reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and therefore it is more appropriate to await the outcome of that review before making a decision response. This recommendation will be referred back to the Panel.</p>
<p>4.5.2 In consultation with the public, reviewing the role of the Council Newspaper so that it can better meet the needs of the community</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Research with members of the public is beginning in December to review the role of the Council Newspaper. A detailed report with recommendations will be developed</p> <p>Further research would be required to identify community needs</p>
<p>4.5.3 Making more use of recent photographs of local people in Council publications</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Where faces are shown in the photographs or where the issues will not cause offence if associated with local people it is accepted that local people should be used whenever possible. However there will be exceptions for the reasons outlined above. It will remain necessary to use agency photographs for some publications.</p>
<p>4.5.4 Developing and implementing Council wide (Members and Officers) “Customer</p>	<p>Cllr Crossley</p>	<p>Accept the principle</p>		<p>Accept the principle that all the Council’s Corporate Priorities should covered by</p>

Communications Review (CIP O&S Panel): Executive Response Table

Recommendation	Exec Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
Care” and Communications training programmes to reinforce the need for effective communications and personal responsibility for the Council’s image				appropriate training. The communications strategy will address the issue of core media competency and this will be recommended as a priority for the Training plans for Members and staff in 2005/6.
4.5.5 Exploring the usage of alternative and emerging communications technologies including digital TV, radio, broadband, e-mail, SMS messaging and customer screens in public places e.g. post offices and shops.	Cllr Crossley	Accept	Ongoing	Some of these new technologies are being explored initially as options within the draft communications strategy. However more detailed analysis will be explored as actions within the communication strategy.