



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Corporate Communications Strategy
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	13 March 2019
Key Decision:	NO
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Service Area:	Communications
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the Communications Strategy which covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. This document outlines how the Council will use good communications to build a stronger reputation, involve and inform residents, engage effectively with stakeholders and improve customer satisfaction.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Communications Strategy 2019-20.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 Good communication has an important role to play in modern local government.

- 3.1.2 Research from Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA) has shown a direct link between good communication and satisfaction levels among residents.
- 3.1.3 LGcommunications built on the LGA's research to offer a more in-depth analysis of how the whole organisation has its own part to play in reputation management.
- 3.1.4 Good communications has also been shown to enhance stakeholder participation and engagement while protecting and building reputation.
- 3.1.5 The Council has for some years operated without a formal Communications Strategy based on its Corporate Plan.
- 3.1.6 The creation of a new Corporate Plan for late 2018 to March 2020 offered the opportunity to create a Communications Strategy to ensure the Council's delivery of its priorities was well communicated.
- 3.1.7 The proposed Communications Strategy would provide a framework for publicising the council's priority work and help the Communications Team prioritise its activity to maximum effect.
- 3.1.8 The Strategy, along with a variety of supporting documents, will build on the strong foundations which are in place at the Council for providing quality information to stakeholders in an extensive and inclusive fashion.
- 3.1.9 Its stated commitment is as follows:
"The purpose of this strategy is to ensure communication about the Council's priorities is carried out in an effective and consistent way."
- 3.1.10 The Strategy will deliver this by:
a) ensuring our communication is valuable and accessible to all;
b) representing the full diversity of our communities and ensuring equality of access to all our services;
c) providing accurate information in a clear and simple style;
d) using a wide range of methods in a holistic, joined-up manner, to maximise reach;
e) engaging in two-way conversations to capture the views of our audiences; and
f) being open and transparent in our approach.
- 3.1.11 It will be supported by the recently-established Internal Communications Strategy; the Social Media and Corporate Style Guidelines; the Social Media Protocol; the Local Government Digital Standards; and the Local Government Reform Communications Strategy.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 In the absence of a Communications Strategy, the Council's communication has become too broad and unfocused.

- 3.2.2 Issues during the past few years with delivery of projects has resulted in the perception of poor value for money and lack of progress, which in turn has impacted on the Council's reputation.
- 3.2.1 While the council has turned a corner on several high-profile issues arising in recent years, they continue to have reputational impact.
- 3.2.2 Local government reform in Northamptonshire presents a number of challenges during the coming year and while the process will largely be led externally, it will still impact the individual constituent authorities' reputations.

3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 Option one (preferred)

The preferred option is for Cabinet can choose to adopt the Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-2020, which will enable the Communications Team to appropriately focus its activity for the year.

3.3.2 Option two (not recommended)

Cabinet can decline to adopt the Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-2020. This option is not recommended as it would leave the Council's communications activity unfocused.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from adoption of this Strategy.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 Adoption of the strategy would help focus the Communications Team's activity, thereby making better use of the available resource. Failure to adopt would lead to continued unfocused delivery and under-utilisation of communications resource.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 Legal services have reviewed the contents of the proposed Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-2020 and have no comments.

4.4 Equality and Health

- 4.4.1 Adoption of the Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-2020 will help ensure that Council communication is inclusive through use of a wide variety of channels to publicise its work.
- 4.4.2 There are no direct health implications arising from adoption of this Strategy.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Cabinet members, Corporate Management Board and Council staff have been consulted on the Strategy.

4.5.2 Feedback has been used to refine the document.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 The Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-20 will help support and promote the Council's vision, mission and values as set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-2020, in particular:

- We want to encourage strong community bonds and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to achieve their ambitions.
- We and a great many residents are extremely proud of our town and we want to help provide even more reasons for those feelings of belonging and ownership.
- We will work with customers, communities and partners
- Creating and communicating a shared vision and influencing others through information and knowledge to realise the vision
- Honesty with strong moral principles
- Understanding what our customers want and in order to deliver above and beyond their expectations

4.6.2 Adoption of the Strategy meets the following specific priorities as set out within the Corporate Plan 2018-2020:

Support a range of events and activities throughout the year to celebrate our town and its heritage

- Support the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the town's heritage can bring
- Promote awareness of the impact of vehicle emissions on health
- Continue to promote the 'Night's Out Northampton' Campaign
- Work with the University of Northampton to deliver community safety messages to students
- Work with partners to tackle serious organised crime, focusing on initiatives to reduce youth violence, gangs and knife crime
- Promote key community safety messages
- Utilise community payback, community volunteers and voluntary organisations to address environmental issues
- Use community events to celebrate the diversity of the town
- Continue to implement our multi-agency 'Together We Change Lives' strategy
- Develop a people/workforce strategy and implement the NBC people plan
- Develop and deliver an employee engagement plan
- Provide a resolution at the first point of contact
- Deliver simpler, clearer, faster services designed around the customer need
- Doing the right things, in the right way for the people of Northampton in an open, honest and accountable manner

5. Appendices

6.1 Corporate Communications Strategy 2019-2020

6. Background Papers

5.1 [Local Government Association Reputation of Local Government campaign](#)

5.2 [LGcommunications/LGA New Reputation Guide](#)

Craig Forsyth
Marketing & Communications Manager
01604 837306