

For publication

Update on the Communications and Engagement Strategy

1.0 Purpose of report

Meeting:	Community, customer and organisational scrutiny committee
Date:	22 January 2019
Cabinet portfolio:	Deputy Leader/ Governance
Report by:	Assistant Director Policy and Communications

1.1 To update scrutiny members on progress on our delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018 – 2023 was approved by Council in July 2018. This strategy brought together several key strands including external communication, internal communication and community engagement which had previously been included in three separate strategies. The aim was to develop one over overarching framework to better coordinate and improve how we communicate with and engage our customers and communities.

2.3 This report follows on from the presentation, question and answer and discussion session with the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee in March 2018 which contributed to the development of the strategy.

3.0 Strategy objectives and progress

3.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy includes eight objectives. An annual action plan will be developed for each of the four full years of the strategy 2019/20 – 2022/23 and a half year plan was developed for the remainder of 2018/19.

3.2 The table below shows progress updates for the objectives so far:

Objective: Continue to do the basics well	
Activity	Progress
Successfully merging Your Chesterfield and Our Homes to deliver four quality editions each year.	<p>Progress on this issue follows on from an effective consultation and engagement partnership between Policy and Communications and Housing services in 2017/18 which saw us bring all consultation activity in-house. This partnership improved the quality and customer service to tenants, increased response rates, made a saving to the Housing Revenue Account and generated a small income for the General Fund.</p> <p>For 2018/19 agreement was reached that we would extend this approach to the production and delivery of the Our Homes newsletter. Through merging the publications we were able to increase the frequency of the Your Chesterfield publication from three times a year to four times a year – enabling more frequent communication with residents who do not access our website and social media channels. Additional benefits have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased the frequency of Your Chesterfield/ Our Homes without increasing the overall cost to the Council – economies of scale on print, production and distribution. • A small saving was made for the Housing Revenue Account • Enabled Our Homes to focus purely on tenant issues rather than having to cover other general corporate issues (which would appear in the

	<p>Your Chesterfield part of the publication but still be read by tenants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevented duplication of stories between the two publications • Enabled Our Homes to adopt a case study led approach to tell stories through tenants, thereby increasing the opportunities to engage positively with that tenant group • Enabled the identities of both publications to remain ensuring that the HRA can demonstrate spending is targeted at tenants • Ensured brand consistency across both publications • Provided some resilience to housing services (due to staff shortages some editions of Our Homes had not been produced therefore reducing communication with tenants) • Enabled the creation of a new apprentice role within Policy and Communications to support this activity, website/intranet development, social media and video production • Enabled tenant participation officers to spend more time on their core duties including increasing opportunities for face to face engagement • Our Homes is now seen by all residents, enabling corporate housing communication messages to reach a bigger audience (eg making wider population aware of the properties available to rent through RightMove; helping wider public understand council housing is funded by tenant rents rather than their Council Tax; getting fire safety messages out in response to wider community concerns following the Grenfell Tower fire etc.) <p>Two high quality editions of the new combined publication have been produced during 2018/19, with further editions planned for January 2019 and March 2019.</p> <p>As part of the 2019/20 Are You Being Served residents survey we will be capturing residents</p>
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	<p>feedback on the new combined newsletter and making further improvements.</p>
<p>Prepare for the introduction on the EU Web Accessibility Directive in 2020.</p>	<p>A full briefing and action paper was developed for Corporate Management Team discussion. The recommendations are currently being taken forward to achieve full compliance by 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a website accessibility statement – complete • Conducting an audit of current accessibility standard of the council website and microsites - the main site audit has now been completed with plans for additional sites • Planning a programme of improvements to achieve EU Directive accessibility standards by 2020 – draft plan developed
<p>Create a consultations page on the council's website to bring together all live and concluded consultation information, including details of Completed survey reports.</p>	<p>Following work with Derbyshire Community Engagement Group to identify the options for this activity we are ready to launch in January 2019.</p> <p>This page will appear as the first result in website search engines for consultation at Chesterfield Borough Council. All consultation feedback reports will be published on the website within two months of the consultation being completed.</p> <p>Details of the live consultations and where to access more information in person or telephone will also be available at key buildings including the customer services centre in the Libraries information folder.</p>
<p>Continue to provide support to services planning consultation events to ensure opportunities to engage with the council face-to-face are developed (e.g. help with focus groups, roadshows, discussions</p>	<p>So far during 2018/19 we have been able to increase the number of face to face engagement sessions (particularly in housing services and planning) to enable members of the public without internet access to engage. Key face to face consultations have included changes to the allocations policy, repairs and maintenance, anti-social behaviour, Gypsy and Traveller consultation and the Local Plan.</p>

with customer service).	
Objective: Make better use of customer data, intelligence and feedback to improve Communications and engagement	
All services to be required to produce a 'you said, we did' statement when reporting back on consultation findings.	Following positive discussions at the CBC community engagement group and with portfolio holders – this will be a requirement for all services undertaking consultation activities from April 2019. The statements will appear on the Council's consultation page on the website and be available to develop into social media posts and stories for Your Chesterfield/Our Homes.
Investigate ways to collate evidence being gained from interactions with the public including councillor surgeries, tenant participation bus contacts and common questions going to customer services centre/ call centre.	There will be significant improvements to this following the completion of the ICT transformation. We are working with the project leads to ensure maximum benefit for communication and engagement activity. This area will be a key part of the annual action plans over the next four years.
Objective: Tell a clear story (corporate narrative) to explain what we are doing and want to achieve	
Produce housing annual report in more engaging way.	The annual report was published in Your Chesterfield/Our Homes. The report included infographics and case studies to illustrate achievement rather than the standard report format in order to be more accessible. A video was also produced for social media channels.
Report on outcomes of delivering the 2014-2018 Council Plan.	This has been a key part of Your Chesterfield/ our Homes story development during 2018/19. We have also been able to showcase progress via Mayoral engagements, Portfolio holders and senior officer speaking opportunities, social media, website, videos etc.
Increase the use of video and infographics to tell our story in	We now produce around 90 videos a year around a range of different subjects. These videos often have 5 – 10k views across the various platforms and are

<p>a simple and engaging way.</p>	<p>a great way to attract attention to key services, events and policy changes. We have also introduced repairs and maintenance videos to assist tenants (and residents) in undertaking basic repairs and maintenance activities in their homes.</p> <p>The two Your Chesterfield/Our Homes editions for 2018/19 have benefited from infographics to illustrate the story. We have also successfully used infographics for consultation and engagement feedback, internal communication and economic development related activity.</p> <p>As part of the 2019/20 Are You Being Served residents survey we will be capturing residents feedback on the new combined newsletter, videos and infographics in order to make further improvements.</p>
<p>Objective: Engage our residents in online conversations where they are happening (eg Facebook groups)</p>	
<p>Carry out a social media stakeholder audit to identify relevant stakeholder groups and prioritise according to likely impact on reputation.</p>	<p>By April 2019 we will have completed a stakeholder map of social media audiences relevant to the Council. We can then develop a priority list and plans on how best to engage these groups.</p> <p>During 2018/19 we have been more pro-active in monitoring and responding where appropriate to social media activity on non-Council sites e.g. Derbyshire Times Facebook and Twitter, Chesterfield Opinions etc.</p>
<p>Objective: Use technology upgrades and developments to have better conversations with our customers</p>	
<p>This objective will be a key part of the annual action plans over the next four years. We are actively engaged in the ICT transformation programme and will seek to maximise benefits for engaging our customers.</p>	
<p>Objective: Complete the rollout of the visual identity aspect of our corporate branding to council buildings</p>	
<p>Complete Town Hall branding of corridors and signage.</p>	<p>Plan and suppliers approved. The basement, ground floor and first floor have been completed. The second and third floors will follow on alongside</p>

	the Town Hall re-development project.
Investigate options to upgrade signage on housing estates.	This activity has been paused temporarily due to the changes in Housing management. This activity will form part of the 2019/20 action plan.
Objective: Reach out to our staff and councillors through engaging delivery of key corporate messages eg infographics and video	
Seek bank of key messages and statistics from all services that can be used as basis of regular communications using infographics to celebrate success and highlight areas for improvement.	<p>Core brief has been used consistently during 2018/19 to provide managers with key information to share and discuss at their team meetings. The number of staff accessing team meetings has increased and the feedback on the core brief programme has been excellent.</p> <p>We have increased the use of infographics and videos on the aspire intranet to help to provide key messages and information in a more accessible way to staff and elected members.</p> <p>We will capture further feedback and make further improvements following the spring employee survey.</p>
Ensure news and key information is updated at least every two days with a view to aiming towards daily updates.	This target activity has been met during 2018/19 with regular updates, news feeds and engaging content available via aspire intranet.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 We will be developing our 2019/20 action plan to coincide with the new Council Plan 2019 – 2023 and the ICT transformation programme. We have a Policy and Communications Service away day planned for February 2019 so all staff within the service can be involved in developing the plan.
- 4.2 Our progress on the 2018/19 action plan and early progress on the 2019/20 action plan may be impacted resourcing challenges due to a key vacancy within the service – Communications and Marketing Manager. We are currently in

the recruitment process which will conclude by 23 January, there could however be a significant notice period depending on the successful candidate.