

For publication

Implementation of the Communications and Engagement Strategy

Meeting:	Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee
Date:	30 January, 2020
Cabinet portfolio:	Deputy Leader
Report by:	Assistant Director, Policy and Communications

Purpose of reviewing the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review progress of implementation of the Communications and Engagement Strategy (approved by Council in July 2018).
What are the objectives of the review?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review progress to date of implementation of the Communications and Engagement Strategy during 2019/20 to date.
Key Issues for Review	Communications and engagement strategy objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to do the basics well• Make better use of customer data, intelligence and feedback to improve Communications and engagement• Tell a clear story (corporate narrative) to explain what we are doing and want to achieve• Engage our residents in online conversations where they are happening• Use technology upgrades and developments to have better conversations with our customers• Complete the rollout of the visual identity aspect of our corporate branding to council buildings

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to our staff and councillors through engaging delivery of key corporate messages eg infographics and video |
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1.0 **Background**

1.1 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 overarching framework to better coordinate and improve how we communicate with and engage our customers and communities.

2.0 **Current position and key milestones**

2.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy includes eight objectives. Annual action plans are developed to progress the Strategy. The first progress report to Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee was discussed 22 January 2019. That report highlighted progress so far in 2018/19. This report highlights progress so far for 2019/20 for each of the objectives.

Objective: Continue to do the basics well	
Activity	Progress
Successfully merging Your Chesterfield and Our Homes to deliver four quality editions each year.	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.

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:

- 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 Your Chesterfield part of the publication but still be read by tenants)
- 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)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a programme of improvements to achieve EU Directive accessibility standards by 2020 – draft plan developed
<p>Create communications work plan detailing month-on-month tasks and team activities</p>	<p>This has been developed as is being used to monitor progress, allocate resources and enable forward planning at Communications and Marketing team meetings.</p> <p>Comprehensive communications and where appropriate communications and engagement plans are developed for specific projects and campaigns for example the Shop Local Campaign.</p>
<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>This page is now up and running. This page appears as the first result in website search engines for consultation at Chesterfield Borough Council.</p> <p>The page displays information about live consultation activity, how to get involved and how to find out more information as well as links to past consultation activity.</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 with customer service).</p>	<p>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. With key consultation activity currently being developed including for the HS2 masterplanning project.</p> <p>For 2019/20 we have brought Leisure consultation back in-house to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual engagement programme to gather net promoter score and customer feedback

	<p>about services at HLC and QPSC via online, postal and face to face methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topped up net promoter score activities to track during the year • Mystery shopper exercises • During the 'live periods' we will be promoting via corporate social media and leisure social media, with posters in the centres and council locations, and there will also be a 'landing page' on the leisure section of the website with background information and links to the online survey. Policy team will be 'roadshowing' at the centres and helping customers to complete the survey via iPad.
<p>Objective: Make better use of customer data, intelligence and feedback to improve Communications and engagement</p>	
<p>All services to be required to produce a 'you said, we did' statement when reporting back on consultation findings.</p>	<p>This approach has led to a range of infographic led stories via Your Chesterfield/Our Homes and for social media release to keep residents informed of progress.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>There will be significant improvements to this following the completion of the ICT transformation and will form part of the action plan for the final years of this strategy.</p>
<p>Objective: Tell a clear story (corporate narrative) to explain what we are doing and want to achieve</p>	
<p>Produce housing annual report in more engaging way.</p>	<p>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</p>

	format in order to be more accessible. A video was also produced for social media channels.
Report on outcomes of delivering the 2019-2023 Council Plan.	We have also been able to showcase regular progress via Mayoral engagements, Portfolio holders and senior officer speaking opportunities, social media, website, videos etc. There has been a significant increase in video and infographics to highlight progress. The Council Plan has also been a key driver for Your Chesterfield/ our Homes story development during 2019/20.
Increase the use of video and infographics to tell our story in a simple and engaging way.	<p>We produce monthly digital reports to review our digital activity including videos and infographics and their engagement rates. An example report is attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>The report provides an overview of all the digital work streams being undertaken within the communications and marketing team. It considers the council's social media accounts, the website, aspire, graphic design projects and digital improvements being undertaken.</p> <p>The size, scale and diversity of communications and marketing activity continues to increase. During October and November alone we created 40 videos, completed 10 photographic assignments and 24 graphic design programmes alongside increasing our social media views and interaction.</p>
Objective: Engage our residents in online conversations where they are happening	
Carry out a social media stakeholder audit to identify relevant stakeholder groups and prioritise according to likely impact on reputation.	During 2019/20 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. as well as our own corporate and service social media sites.

Objective: Use technology upgrades and developments to have better conversations with our customers

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 and have support the programme by creating procedures for developing/evaluating web content as services move to the new digital platform, advising on the look, feel and user experience on the digital platform, accessibility and consultation.

Objective: Complete the rollout of the visual identity aspect of our corporate branding to council buildings

Complete Town Hall branding of corridors and signage.	Plan and suppliers approved. The basement, ground floor and first floor have been completed. The second and third floors will follow on alongside the Town Hall re-development project.
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Investigate options to upgrade signage on housing estates.	Approved template for new signage has been developed and replacement programme is underway. All refurbishment and new build signage and branding is considered via Communications and Marketing in record to brand guidelines.
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Objective: Reach out to our staff and councillors through engaging delivery of key corporate messages eg infographics and video

Reach out to our staff and councillors through engaging delivery of key corporate messages (eg infographics, video)	<p>Core brief has been used consistently during 2019/20 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 good. Managers seminars have also been utilised as key communication and engagement tool.</p> <p>We are ensuring the news and key information via aspire is updated at least every two days to keep it fresh and engaging. This includes improved carousel and weekly e-bulletins to highlight key stories and information.</p> <p>Staff from across the authority have produced blogs and vlogs so staff can learn more about</p>
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	<p>their roles and we use video content for many more key messages. We are also about to launch CMT getting to know you videos.</p> <p>During 2019/20 we introduced staff competitions to coincide with key external communications and engagement activity. For example we launched the very successful staff in bloom competition and the recycled Christmas decoration competition to coincide with key recycling messages over the festive period.</p>
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3.0 **Barriers/obstacles**

3.1 The size, scale and diversity of communications, marketing and engagement continues to increase; this can be extremely challenging to resource at peak times.

4.0 **Future plans**

4.1 We have been piloting the agency model approach with Housing Services for Communications and Marketing with resources focused in the central Communications and Marketing team but focusing on Housing rather than being based in the service. This has worked extremely well so far and has provided great resilience to both services. This will be an area for discussion in the future with other teams, in particular Economic Growth as their delivery ramps up in-line with the new Joint Economic Growth Unit.

5.0 **Conclusion**

5.1 During 2019/20 there has been further significant improvements to our communications, marketing and engagement offer which benefits the Council, our services and most importantly our customers. This is an

evolving area particularly in relation to digital services which will be a key focus for the remaining part of the strategy delivery period.

6.0 **Suggested scrutiny activity**

- 6.1 To review progress to date of implementation of the Communications and Engagement Strategy progress during 2019/20 to date.

Document information

Report author	Contact number/email
Donna Reddish	Assistant Director – Policy and Communications
Background documents These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
<i>None</i>	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix A	Digital report example