

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	2 May 2017
<b>Subject:</b>	Review of Communications Strategy 2015-16
<b>Report of:</b>	Graeme Simpson, Corporate Services Group Manager
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Mike Dawson, Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Robert Vines, Leader of the Council
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	Two

## **Executive Summary:**

Communications has a vital role to play in helping Tewkesbury Borough Council deliver its vision, priorities and objectives to local people. Our Communications Strategy and action plan is short and simple – looking at how we can grow our communications from how it is now to our aims for the future. This short report provides an overview of the strategy's actions for the final year of the strategy. A new Communications Strategy will be presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting in June.

## **Recommendation:**

**To CONSIDER the progress made in delivering the Communication Strategy Action Plan 2014-16.**

## **Reasons for Recommendation:**

Given that we are a Council delivering a wide range of complex services to more than 80,000 residents, we need to ensure we are effectively communicating, and an annual review provides an effective monitoring process.

## **Resource Implications:**

None other than officer time to implement the action plan.

## **Legal Implications:**

None directly arising from this report.

## **Risk Management Implications:**

If the Council does not have an effective strategy in place then this will adversely affect the reputation of the Council.

## **Performance Management Follow-up:**

Progress in delivering the action plan is reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

## **Environmental Implications:**

None directly arising from this report.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** The aim of the Council's Communications Strategy is to develop and improve our communications, as well as making sure it is in line with current best practice. It is important that, as a Council, we recognise that communicating is at the heart of everything we do at all levels of the organisation. Clear communication helps us to strengthen our links with the public, our residents, stakeholders, councillors and staff.
- 1.2** The strategy was developed with the financial challenges facing local government in mind, and as services develop to be as cost effective as possible, it is vital that we are able to communicate these changes effectively to our target audiences – both internally and externally.
- 1.3** Importantly, the Communications Strategy reflects the importance of supporting our Transform work programme. Communications is vital in helping our customers, Members, staff and stakeholders know when and how a service is changing, or when it can be accessed in a different way.
- 1.4** The strategy and action plan was presented to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a workshop on 17 March 2014, and approved by Executive Committee on 30 April 2014.
- 1.5** It was agreed that an annual review take place to ensure there is effective monitoring of the strategy's actions. This report introduces the third and final annual review.

## **2.0 REVIEW OF YEAR THREE ACTIONS**

- 2.1** A review of the specific actions for year three of the Communications Strategy can be found at Appendix 1. The table shows the individual actions, a brief description of what work has been carried out for each action, and their current status.

- 2.2** Out of the 11 actions, there are two which have not been completed:

Action	Status update
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Investigate the use of info-graphics to help visually communicate complicated messages	This is yet to be undertaken and will be taken forward to the new Communications Strategy 2017-20.
Support the production of a residents' survey every two years from 2013.	The last residents' survey was undertaken in the summer of 2013. A survey was not undertaken in 2015 as initially programmed. The most effective way to carry this out needs to be considered including the potential to use the new website and self service module to capture on going feedback. This has been carried forward as an action within the Corporate Services Team 2016/17 service plan and will be complete by the end of the calendar year.

- 2.3** As this is the final year of the Communications Strategy, the overarching action plan, (which details the actions and their status for years one, two and three), is attached within the main strategy at Appendix 2.
- 2.4** Aside from the two actions described in Paragraph 2.2 above, all other actions have been completed.
- 2.5** It is important to note that these actions are carried out alongside the day-to-day duties of the Communications Team. Last year was a very busy one, with a heavy focus on providing support for the Public Services Centre, the Joint Core Strategy, promoting the Council's new website as well as there being a big increase in the amount of resource needed for monitoring and responding to social media. In addition, the team continues to produce all internal communications, receives a significant number of media enquiries and produces Tewkesbury Borough News (as well as other regular newsletters). This workload was carried out against a reduction in resource for in 2016 as the Communications and Policy Manager was on maternity leave.
- 2.6** A Members' communication workshop was held on 10 October 2016, which was a very positive meeting and it was generally felt that corporate communications to Members worked well and was effective. There were a number of actions agreed within the workshop, including all Members to be copied into editions of Parish Matters; the Overview and Scrutiny newsletter and the Customer Focus Lead Member newsletters to be circulated six monthly rather than quarterly; and to provide quarterly updates to Members on delegated decisions from Executive Committee and Council. These actions have all been implemented.
- 2.7** A new Communications Strategy and accompanying action plan for 2017 to 2020 is being developed and will be presented to Executive Committee in June. It is anticipated that the new strategy will closely reflect the current one, with an emphasis on supporting the Council's Digital Strategy while also ensuring more traditional communications methods remain available.

### **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1** None.

#### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

**4.1** An Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop was set up to review the strategy.

#### **5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**5.1** Council Plan 2012-16 (now 2016-20).

Social Media Policy

Digital Strategy

Customer Care Strategy

#### **6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**6.1** None.

#### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

**7.1** Managed within current resources and budget

#### **8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

**8.1** None.

#### **9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**

**9.1** Good communications will improve stakeholder's knowledge of, and access to, council services and information.

#### **10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

**10.1** None.

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**Background Papers:** None

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 – Year Three Actions  
Appendix 2 – Communications Strategy Action Plan