

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 June 2019
Subject:	Review of Communications Strategy
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

Communications has a vital role to play in helping Tewkesbury Borough Council deliver its vision, priorities and objectives to local people. The Council's refreshed Communication Strategy was approved at Executive Committee on 7 June 2017 with a supporting action plan. The progress in delivering the action plan is reported through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress made against the actions within the Communications Strategy during 2018/19.

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 will be 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 was approved at Executive Committee on 7 June 2017 with a supporting action plan. To ensure there is effective monitoring of the strategy's actions, it was agreed an annual review would be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ACTIONS 2018/19 UPDATE

- 2.1** Last year was a really busy one for the Council's Communications Team. There was a focus on providing continued support for the Public Services Centre with the launch of the Growth Hub, developing our social media engagement, ongoing promotion for the Joint Core Strategy, communicating the local elections and reviewing the format of Tewkesbury Borough News.
- 2.2** As you will see, the majority of actions for the 2018/19 action plan have been completed. Out of the 17 actions, three have not been achieved. These are:
 - 1. Carry out a review of internal communications to incorporate any improvements as a result of the Office 365 implementation - *Phase two of the Office 365 roll-out, which will include staff training is set for Mid-September. Therefore, the team remains ready to achieve this action as soon as we are able to.*
 - 2. Consolidate Council photo library - *This is a significant project, which will require a large resource. There are currently large numbers of photos stored across many drives – all of which are of varying quality and relevance. Moving forward, we will work with the digital team to identify if there are any solutions which could make the management of photos easier and simpler across the organisation.*
 - 3. Review the ways in which we can make our intranet a 'one-stop shop' for staff - *While the deadline for this action has been missed, a formal project team has been set up to deliver a new intranet by December 2019. This will include a new Members' section, which has previously not been available.*

- 2.3** It is worth noting that these actions were carried out alongside the day-to-day reactive duties of the Communications Team, including producing all corporate external press releases and internal communications, dealing with a significant number of media enquiries and producing regular newsletters/annual reports to a range of audiences.

3.0 NEW COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2019 TO 2021

- 3.1** The current Communications Strategy was introduced in 2017 and is now in need of updating. A new strategy will be developed over the coming months and brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment, before being presented to the Executive Committee for approval.
- 3.2** The team is looking to do even more work around the management of social media to engage with residents of all ages, to improve our corporate communications with Town and Parish Councils, to increase the use of video output and develop our internal staff communications further. This will be alongside providing communications support for key corporate projects such as regenerating Spring Gardens, the Garden Town for Tewkesbury and the Joint Core Strategy. A detailed action list will be developed alongside the new strategy.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1** None.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1** An Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group was set up to review the strategy.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 6.1** Council Plan (2016-20)
Social Media Policy
Digital Strategy
Customer Care Strategy

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 7.1** None.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

- 8.1** Managed within current resources and budget

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

- 9.1** None.

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

- 10.1** Good communications will improve stakeholder's knowledge of, and access to, Council services and information.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 None.

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Corporate Services Manager
01684 272291 clare.evans@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 – 2018/19 Action Plan Update