

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 January 2020
Subject:	Communications Strategy
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

Communications has a vital role to play in helping Tewkesbury Borough Council deliver its vision, priorities and objectives to local people.

This 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.

It will support the Council Plan and the Council's other strategies by ensuring we effectively communicate our priorities and objectives to relevant audiences.

Recommendation:

To approve the Communications Strategy and Media Protocol.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Given that we are a Council delivering a wide range of complex services to more than 90,000 residents, we need a clear strategy to face the challenge of communicating effectively.

Resource Implications:

None other than officer time to implement the action plan.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report but legal advice will be provided as the actions in the strategy are implemented, in order to comply with relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act 2018 and procurement law.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Council does not have a strategy in place then this will adversely affect its reputation.

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 previous Communications Strategy was approved by Executive Committee in 2017, so it is now necessary to introduce a new strategy that develops and improves our communications, as well as making sure it is in line with current best practice. It is important 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** As the financial challenges facing local government continue, and services change to be as cost effective as possible, it is vital that we communicate these changes effectively to our target audiences – both internally and externally.
- 1.3** The strategy and action plan reflect the importance of supporting the Council's transformation programme. Communications will be 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.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 2.1** To communicate effectively means to listen as well as broadcast and it only works when what we are saying is clear and easy to understand.
- 2.2** This Communications Strategy (2020 to 2024) provides a framework and action plan for how we can drive forward our approach to communications – both internally and externally - ensuring we embrace modern digital communications (such as social media, the website and email communications) while recognising the need to continue to include the more traditional methods (such as face-to-face and phone).
- 2.3** The strategy identifies:
- Key communication principles.
 - What we have achieved so far.
 - What people think of us.
 - What we want to achieve – our six objectives.
 - How we will achieve this.
- 2.4** It is supported by an action plan, which will sit alongside the day-to-day work of the communications and graphics team, which includes:
- Responding to media enquiries.
 - Responding to communication and design requests from all services across the Council.
 - The production and delivery of proactive communications, such as press releases, posters, Tewkesbury Borough News, Staff Briefings and e-newsletters.
 - Social media monitoring and updates.

2.5 Within the 'How will we achieve this?' section, the strategy outlines the different approaches we will use to achieve our objectives, which will be through:

- Media and PR.
- Corporate communications.
- Social media.
- Promoting digital.
- Creative and design service.
- Tewkesbury Borough News.
- Internal communications.

2.6 Attached at Appendix 2 is the Council's Media Protocol, which outlines our approach to responding to media enquiries, developing press releases and identifying spokespeople. The Media Protocol remains very much the same as in previous years, with the addition of a section to clarify who should be quoted in a press release about motions to Council. This can be found on Page No. 14 under 'who should be quoted in a press release?'

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Citizens' Panel consultation on communications – November 2019.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan 2016 to 2020.
Social Media Policy and Guidelines.
Digital Strategy.
Written Style and Branding Guide.

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.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices:

1. Communications Strategy.
2. Media Protocol.