

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 April 2022
Subject:	Communication Strategy 2020-24 - Action Plan Annual Review
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. The Council's refreshed Communication Strategy was approved at Executive Committee in 2021 with a supporting annual 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 2021/22 and to endorse the action plan for 2022/23.

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, 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:

The promotion of the paperless billing offer should lead to less printed paper and the work around digital communications will help reduce the need to visit Council Offices, supporting our work around carbon reduction.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The aim of the Council's Communications Strategy, which can be found at Appendix 1, 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** Communications is vital in helping 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 in February 2021 with a supporting annual 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 UPDATE ON 2021/22 ACTIONS

- 2.1** Last year was a another really busy one for the Council's Communications team as it provided support for the Council's pandemic response and recovery, delivered regular communications on adverse weather emergencies, as well as continuing to deliver the team's 'business as usual' proactive work.
- 2.2** The majority of actions for 2021/22, which can be found at Appendix 2, have been completed. Key highlights include:
- Effective communications campaigns to deliver messages on the Council's pandemic response and recovery, including videos, animations and info-graphics.
 - The recruitment of a Garden Communities Communications Officer, giving this key project the communications resource needed to ensure its milestones and messages are effectively communicated.
 - The creation of a range of videos for our recruitment microsite, which help to promote the Council and the borough as an attractive place to work.
 - The delivery of an internal communications survey, which revealed that staff are very satisfied with the channels available to them.
 - The delivery of a wide range of graphic design to support key Council services including recycling, bulky waste, parking and internal messages.

2.3 Out of the 27 actions, five have not been achieved. **These are:**

Action	Status
Investigate options for delivery and print of Tewkesbury Borough News to reduce the increasing costs.	Work has started on this, and we are currently obtaining quotes from Royal Mail's Door-to-Door service. Market research has revealed that other Councils that produce Council magazines use the Royal Mail service. 100% coverage will never be an option; however, the current issues – particularly around Highnam – must be addressed, and that is proving to be very challenging with the current distributors.
Deliver media training for Lead Members, Heads of Service and the Corporate Leadership Team.	Work is currently underway to identify an effective media trainer for lead Members, Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service and this action will be carried across to next year.
Raise the profile of communications and the importance of effective communications via staff briefing session.	Due to resource constraints and competing priorities, this action has not been completed but will be carried across to next year.
Promote Council achievements in local government and service-specific publications.	With the focus being on the Council's pandemic response and recovery, this action has not been delivered. It will be carried across to 2022/23.
Work with IT to ensure the intranet can pop up on staff's computer when they log in to work.	This was a key piece of feedback from the internal communications survey, and will be taken forward as an action for 2022/23.

2.4 It is recognised that each of these actions is important to ensure the aims and objectives of the Communications Strategy are delivered, and they have been pulled across to the 2022/23 action plan.

2.5 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 ACTIONS FOR 2022/23

3.1 Alongside the five actions that were not achieved in 2021, a wide range of new actions have been identified for 2022/23, which can be found at Appendix 2.

3.2 The actions are aimed at raising and protecting the Council's reputation, both internally and externally, as well as with our partner organisations.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 None

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Council Plan (2020 to 2024).

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

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Communications Strategy
Appendix 2 - Communications Strategy Action Plan