

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 December 2023
Subject:	Communication Strategy Action Plan Annual Review
Report of:	Communications and Customer Experience Manager
Head of Service/Director:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

Our Communications Strategy was launched in 2020 and is supported by an annual action plan.

This report provides an update on the 2022/23 Communication Strategy Action Plan – highlighting the range of communications activity that has taken place over the past 12 months.

This is the final year of the current Communications Strategy, and reflecting this, new targets have not been included in this report because these will form part of the new strategy due to be introduced next year.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER progress against the 2022/23 actions within the Communication Strategy Action Plan.

Financial Implications:

Managed within current resources and budget.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

The promotion of the Council's new website, featuring improved accessibility, will help to reduce the need to visit Council Offices, supporting our work around carbon reduction.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

Officer time.

Safeguarding Implications:

None

Impact on the Customer:

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

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 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, Members 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 can communicate these changes effectively to our target audiences – both internally and externally.
- 1.3** 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 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. This report provides the 2022/23 action plan update.

2.0 UPDATE ON 2022 ACTIONS

- 2.1** Last year was another busy one for the Council's Communications Team. It provided support for major Council projects including the Garden Town programme, promoted cost-of-living support, delivered timely communications on adverse weather emergencies, and continued to deliver the team's 'business as usual' proactive work, while operating at reduced capacity for most of the year.
- 2.2** Most actions for 2022, which can be found in Appendix 2, have been completed. Key highlights include:
- A focus on improving social media engagement led to many well-received campaigns and posts such as: highlighting rescheduled waste and recycling collections due to severe weather and promoting the requirement to register to vote. These campaigns received national recognition.
 - Supporting the launch of the new corporate website to ensure information is clearly presented and the Council's news is effectively presented online.
 - Media training was delivered for Lead Members and the Corporate Leadership Team, with positive feedback.
 - The introduction and production of 'Alistair's Update' – a bi-weekly video update from the Chief Executive to all staff, including the celebration of Council achievements.
 - A communications plan and branding were developed to support the first-floor refurbishment project.

- Engaging graphic design work was produced to accompany a range of social media campaigns including a new civic pride project, Garden Town updates, and the launch of the planning application tracker.
- The delivery of communications campaigns including promotion of the Council Plan, promotion of civic pride in the borough, promotion of our parks and public spaces, and promotion of voter ID requirements for the May 2023 elections.

2.3 Out of the 21 actions, four have not been achieved. These are:

Action	Status
Raise the profile of communications and the importance of effective communications via staff briefing session.	The Communications Team is on the agenda for a 2024 staff briefing session.
Promote Council achievements in local government and service-specific publications.	Due to limited resource in the Communications Team, this action was not completed and has moved across to 2024.
Review the effectiveness of the Council's intranet	Due to the time it took to recruit a Web Developer, this action was not completed and will be moved across to 2024.
Deliver social media training for all Councillors.	While an introduction to the Council's use of social media and its corporate social media channels formed part of the Member Induction Programme, formal training still needs to be arranged.

2.4 It is recognised that each of these actions are important to ensure the aims and objectives of the Communications Strategy are delivered, and they will be transferred to the 2024 action plan that will accompany the new Communications Strategy.

2.5 It is worth noting that all the actions were carried out alongside the day-to-day reactive duties of the Communications Team, including producing all corporate external press releases, all social media management, Tewkesbury Borough News, internal communications, dealing with a significant number of media enquiries and producing regular newsletters/annual reports to a range of audiences, all while operating at reduced capacity.

3.0 NEW COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR 2024

3.1 A new Communications Strategy for 2024 will be developed next year, aligned to the new Council Plan and the Council's ambition to become a high performing organisation.

3.2 Alongside the four actions that were not achieved in 2022/23, a wide range of new actions will be developed in the new strategy's annual action plan.

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

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None.

5.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

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

6.0 MONITORING

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

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 Council Plan (2020 to 2024)

Social Media Policy

Digital Approach

Customer Care Strategy

Background Papers: None

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