

28 November 2019 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Despatched: 20.11.19



# Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee

## Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Fleming; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Bayley  
Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Clayton, Esler, Eyre, Hogarth, Maskell, McGregor,  
Pearsall and Waterton

## Agenda

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b>	(Pages 1 - 4)	
To agree minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 3 October 2019, as a correct record.		
2. <b>Declarations of interest</b>		
Any declarations not already registered.		
3. <b>Actions form previous meeting (if any)</b>		
4. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		
5. <b>Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)</b>		
6. <b>Communications Strategy</b>	(Pages 5 - 32)	Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
7. <b>LG Inform</b>	(Pages 33 - 34)	Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
8. <b>Capital Projects &amp; Regeneration</b>	(Pages 35 - 36)	Lesley Bowles Tel: 01732 227335
9. <b>Work plan</b>	(Pages 37 - 38)	

## **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

**IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Esler, Hogarth, Pearsall and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Clayton, Eyre, Maskell and McGregor

Cllr. Dickins was also present.

13. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Innovation Committee held on 27 June 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

15. Actions from previous meeting

The actions were noted.

16. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman advised Members that the Customer Solutions team had three vacancies in recent months but following successful interviews it was hoped that that the posts would shortly be filled. A good response had been received to the recruitment advert for the new Senior Management posts. Work on the Customer Redesign was continuing with a focus on the reception. The workforce plan was continuing with work considering areas such as extended hours and recruitment.

Members were updated on the Council's projects advising that the, White Oak planning application would shortly submitted and it would need to be considered by the Development Control Committee for a decision.

Meeting Point plans were in the final stages and would be shared with Swanley Town Council before going to Development Control Committee. Plans were being

## Agenda Item 1

### Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 3 October 2019

developed for Bevan Place and it was hoped that the show home in Burlington Mews would be finished in December.

#### 17. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

#### 18. Budget 2020/21: Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)

The Chief Officer Finance & Trading presented a report which explained that this was the second stage of the budget process and ensured that all Members of the Advisory Committees had a role to play in the governance of the Council and the budget decision making process. He explained that since the current financial strategy was introduced in 2011/12, over £7 million of savings had been agreed.

To continue to have a balanced budget position and remain financially self-sufficient, a net savings requirement of £93,000 for 2020/21 was included in the budget. The Chief Officer Finance & Trading also advised Members that other pressures may come out later in the budget process such as when the Local Government Finance Settlement was announced in December. These may result in additional savings being required.

Two savings proposals were included in the report for this Committee and Members were advised that there was an error in SCIA 2 which should have read as a total of £10,000 savings rather than growth. Members were asked for their suggestions, in order to achieve the £93,000 net saving required for the next year, which would be considered by Cabinet, before finalising the budget for 2020/21.

Members gave their individual ideas for growth and savings items and considered whether there was anything they wanted taken forward as potential growth or savings suggestions. A number of growth and savings items were suggested and discussed.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The growth proposal (SCIA01) and savings proposal (SCIA02) identified in Appendix D to the report; and
- b) the following options be put forward to Cabinet

Savings (reduced expenditure or increased income)

- Reduce paper and print (e.g. for Members)
- Buy more/build more - to earn more income

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- Electric car project
- Explore digital monetarisation
- IT Services - adopt ISO50001
- Bulky Waste (freighter) collection - improve Parish Council awareness which may increase income
- Review working methods e.g. home working, hot desking, job sharing, Customer Redesign

19. Work plan

The work plan was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.45 PM

CHAIRMAN

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## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 28 November 2019

Report of Chief Executive

Status For Consideration

Key Decision No

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Peter Fleming

**Contact Officer** Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

**Recommendations to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:** that Members provide comments and suggestions on the Draft Communications Strategy

#### Introduction and Background

- 1 In September 2018, the Council invited a Peer Team from the Local Government Association to conduct a Communications Review. At the Council's request, the review focussed on a number of specific priorities. These were capacity and capability; digital; role of Members; internal communications; and priority setting.
- 2 The Peer Review team concluded that Sevenoaks District Council has a strong communications base and a clear appetite to succeed.
- 3 To assist the Council to achieve its aims, the Peer Review team provided a report and set out a range of recommendations for the Council to take forward.
- 4 One of the key recommendations identified by the Peer Review team was to 'embed additional strategic communications resources and communications skill into the communications team'. With the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Communications, the Council appointed an experienced communications professional to provide support to the Communications Team on a temporary basis.
- 5 The work to support the Communication Team was focussed on delivering a new Communications Strategy and improved ways of working to deliver that strategy effectively. That support was provided following the District Council elections and, with the exception of three further days retained for supporting the team, that contract concluded at the end of September this year.

## Agenda Item 6

### **Draft Communications Strategy**

- 6 Provided at Appendix A is the draft Communications Strategy. This draft document has been created for collaboration and input from Members of the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee and then the Communication Team as owners and implementers of the strategy.
- 7 When the approach and words are signed off, this document will be reported to the Council's Strategic Management Team, designed in the Sevenoaks brand style by the Print Studio and presented to Cabinet for adoption.
- 8 Providing an early draft of the Strategy ensures that Members input can be incorporated fully in the approach they wish the Council to take to its communication with residents, local businesses and other stakeholders.

### **Communications Review Action Plan**

- 9 In addition to the work on the Draft Communications Strategy, additional work has been completed, that subject to agreement of the strategy will be implemented by Officers before the end of March 2019.
- 10 These actions include a review of the Council's visual identity and brand guide to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This review also takes in to account the need to retain a strong brand identity across all Council services and the growing importance of social media channels as an effective means of communicating with residents.
- 11 Questionnaires have also been prepared to assess communications capabilities and preferences amongst Council staff that may be useful in generating additional communications resource from within existing staff. A questionnaire for Council Members is also recommended to assess communication preferences and identify any further areas where they would wish to see improvement in the way the Council communicates with them. This would enable the effective delivery of a new newsletter or information bulletin for Members, which was recommended by the Peer Review and supported by the work undertaken by the external support bought in to the Communications Team.
- 12 An approach to communications planning has been developed and officers in the communications team trained to ensure a proactive approach to communications using the OASIS campaign methodology advocated by the Government Communication Service. It is recommended that a campaign focussed on the Council Plan is delivered early in 2020. This new approach will incorporate campaign planning, development of content, implementation and measurement and evaluation.
- 13 An annual communications plan has been drafted which will incorporate the communications strategy action plan deliverables, campaigns, marketing activity, internal communications, social media and events. The intention is that the content on the communications plan will be first updated with knowledge within the communications team, then shared with teams for



input and content regularly. The plan would be updated and discussed monthly with the Portfolio Holder for Communications.

- 14 Additional work is also being undertaken on working practices across the Communications and Print Studio teams and to develop IT systems to better support high quality, effective and consistent communication across the Council.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

There are no financial implications to this report.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal or risk implications related to this report.

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **Conclusions**

Following the Peer Review of the Council's communications the Council appointed an experienced communications professional to provide support to the Communications Team on a temporary basis to develop a new communications strategy and to provide support in the delivery of the actions set out by the Peer Review team. This report provides an update on progress and a draft communications strategy for Members comments.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Draft Communication Strategy

## **Background Papers**

Communications Peer Review report

<http://cde.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s36167/06%20Communications%20Review%20-%20App%20A%20-%20Peer%20Review%20report.pdf?J=4>

**Pav Ramewal**

**Chief Executive**

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## DRAFT Communications Strategy

Foreword (Leader and / or Chief Executive to sign off)

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to ensuring that the whole organisation communicates effectively and efficiently. Effective communication and engagement is critical to deliver excellent services and develop a two-way flow of information between the council and our key audiences. We want to ensure that our residents, local businesses, partner organisations, staff, Elected Members and every other interested party is regularly informed, updated and engaged using a wide range of channels.

We are committed to delivering excellence, innovation and value for money in everything we do, and communications plays a key role in promoting this way of working. The way we communicate as a society is rapidly changing and we need to ensure that the council is in step with these changes. The media landscape is also dramatically shifting from traditional media to the world of social and digital media. It is clear that we need to continually review and adapt the way we communicate and ensure that all parts of the organisation are aware of the importance of this dynamic approach.

This communications strategy outlines our approach to ensure that we provide customer centric direct and proactive communications with local residents and communities over the next three years.

Include photo(s) of Peter and or Pav.

Pull out statements

A seriously different council, we communicate with our customers in an authentic way.

We put the wellbeing of our employees, residents and businesses at the heart of everything we do.

## 1. Introduction

This communications strategy sets out the way the council communicates with a wide range of key audiences. It takes us from where we are now to our aspirations for the future. It is backed up by an action plan, which sets out the activities we need to achieve to meet the council's ambitions.

This strategy reflects the ongoing decline of traditional broadcast media and the steady growth of digital and social media as key channels for communication in the 21st century. Social media has transformed the way people receive and share information. It can also be used effectively to engage with residents and other key stakeholders.

This strategy runs alongside The Council Plan, but the scale and pace of change means we will need to carry out regular reviews to ensure we are moving in the right direction. This will help us check whether the action plan is on track and work out what corrective action is needed.

This strategy set out ambitions to further improve our communications with a clear focus - to support the delivery of the Council Plan and to ensure that our residents, businesses and visitors can access our services effectively.

This communications strategy shows how strategic communications can;

- Help us achieve our objectives
- Engage effectively with audiences
- Demonstrate the success of our work
- Ensure people understand what we do
- Change behaviour and perceptions where necessary.

## 2. Vision & values

Our vision                    ‘Making Sevenoaks a great place for everyone’ or ‘A seriously different council’  
Our promise                To serve everyone in Sevenoaks by transforming our services and building a safe and thriving community

Our values

- Excellence;
- Innovation;
- Value for money;

These translate to our behaviours

## 3. The Council Plan

The Council Plan sets out the council’s promises. Under these promises are a series of objectives that define how we will achieve these promises.

This strategy supports these ambitions and reflects these objectives in its aims, priorities and actions. It includes a corporate narrative, refreshed brand values and framework for delivering campaigns linked to our strategic priorities.

## 4. Communication Aim & priorities

### 4.1. Aim

The overall aim of this strategy is to; “Develop consistently excellent, innovative, value for money and effective communications, to increase awareness of the council’s services and achievements and improve the reputation of the council.”

It underlines the council’s commitment to providing high quality, planned and consistent communications.

This Communication Strategy sets out a number of key changes to the way we will communicate. In summary, these include;

- More customer centric, direct and proactive communications with local residents and communities
- New campaign planning approach. Producing Campaigns Delivery Plans, agreed with Chief Officers and Portfolio Holders
- Moving from a tactical communication service to a strategic, planned and evaluated approach
- Providing more communications support to elected Members and providing more corporate, coordinated communication with our staff
- Developing a number of complementary plans, to further support this communication strategy, in specific areas such as social media, events, and internal communications
- Detailing communication campaigns and activity for (at least) the next year.

### 4.2. Priorities

In order to bring about the changes and realise the strategic ambitions set out in The Council Plan, our priorities are;

Priority 1: Promote and uphold the council’s reputation as an effective, efficient, innovative organisation that is focused on the public and their needs.

Priority 2: Ensure that all communication and engagement activities are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels to maximise resources, ensure value for money and give maximum support to the council’s strategic priorities.

Priority 3: Promote Sevenoaks, nationally, as a great place for doing business, to live, work and visit.

Priority 4: Increase opportunities for people to engage with the council on issues and services that affect them by developing existing and new channels of communication.

Priority 5: Coordinate internal communications with; a. Staff - to ensure they feel valued and are engaged on the priorities, activities and messages of the council, to inspire them to deliver the vision b. Elected Members - to support them in their role as community leaders, by providing Members with up to date information.

Priority 6: Ensure our digital communications develop in line with advancing technology, social changes and customer needs, to allow us to engage with our communities in an effective and efficient way.

### 4.3. Objectives

These objectives support the delivery of the Council Plan by aligning campaigns with the council promises.

Objective 1: Develop key campaigns linked to the council plan, measure and evaluate success ensuring that learning is captured and fed back into campaign development.

Objective 2: Delivering excellent services. Our customer redesign project is transforming our services and customer experiences. Measures customer services standards

Objective 3: Demonstrating the effectiveness of the council - build reputation

The Council Plan campaign internal and external, brand guidelines. Measures - campaign outcomes, visual audit of materials, awareness of brand guidance. Measure - resident satisfaction survey from x to y.

Objective 4: Supporting colleagues to improve communications

We will introduce a new way to commission communications, design and print support that will be easy to use and will automate some of the existing processes. We will provide campaign toolkits to deliver further savings. We will ensure effective learning is in place to support

brand guardians internally and brand ambassadors with our elected members and partners. Measures; communications capability survey, training outcomes, SLA measures.

## 5. Delivering the strategy

### 5.1. Who will deliver it

The day to day delivery of the Communications Strategy will be led by the councils Communications Team, with the support of the Chief Executive and Strategic Management Team, Council Leader and Cabinet, Elected Members, service/department leads, all staff and our partners.

The overall responsibility for the successful implementation must rest with every member of staff and Elected Members, as they are our ambassadors and play a crucial role in delivering the corporate narrative.

The Communications Team includes;  
 Head of Transformation & Strategy  
 Communications Manager  
 Communications Officer  
 Design & Print Team

Management of some digital communication channels, including social media customer enquiries currently sits within Customer Services.

### 5.2. Communication governance

Currently work is received and undertaken by the Communications Team through a number of mechanisms;

- Services directly task the Communication Team to deliver annual and one off campaigns and activity
- The Chief Executive, SMT, officers, councillors task the Communications Team to deliver campaign activity
- The Chief Executive, service leads and managers task the Communications Team in relation to proactive media releases



- Local, regional and national media request reactive statements and responses from the council via The Communications Team
- Work of a timely or seasonal nature, together with work with partner organisations, is planned in by both teams as and when required.
- Work for the print studio is emailed, sometimes with a print or design brief.
- As a general rule, media work, by its nature, usually has shorter lead in times and a quick delivery timescale, with work usually taking hours or days to complete.
- Campaigns have a longer lead in time and can often take weeks or months to complete.
- Media requests from service leads and managers, with the ultimate decision to undertake the work made by the Head of Communications, and if deemed controversial, in conjunction with SMT or service leads.
- Work for the Communications Team will be agreed and planned in to a Campaign Delivery Plan. This plan will cover a twelve month period towards the end of which it will be reviewed and the following twelve months' work will be included.

In order for work to be placed on the Campaigns Delivery Plan by services, service leads and/or managers must complete a Communications Brief. This will ask for brief details on aims, objectives and outcomes of the activity together with budget and timings. This is to help services to focus on “why” the activity is needed instead of “what” activity will take place and to also assess the request against the council’s objectives as set out in The Council Plan. All planned work must be agreed and approved by a member of SMT. It is often the case that urgent or unforeseen work needs to be completed, sometimes due to changing external situations and pressures. In this case service leads must complete a Communications Brief and a decision will be taken by the Head of Communications and SMT as to what planned work can be put back to accommodate the new work.

### 5.3. Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person, group or organisation that can affect or be affected by an organisation’s actions, objectives and policies. They have varying needs and different stakeholders are entitled to different considerations. They can also have varying levels of influence. Below are a number of the council’s stakeholders, listed according to their likely interest and influence on the council and the district;

Key players	Keep informed	Monitor
Sevenoaks District residents	Partner organisations	Local groups
Elected members	Volunteer organisations	National and international businesses
Service users	Government	Wider general public outside Sevenoaks
Community groups		National media
Our employees		Neighbouring councils
Local businesses		
Visitors		
Local and regional media		

When communicating with our stakeholders we will ensure that we take into consideration the needs of our community, including;

- People who are young or older
- People with a learning difficulty
- People who are hearing impaired or deaf
- People who are visually impaired or blind
- People who do not speak and/or read English

We will develop closer links with partner and voluntary organisations to join up where appropriate on communications projects and channels.

#### 5.4. Narrative

Our corporate narrative and key messages, support the council's ambitions and objectives as set out in The Council Plan. The narratives below are a sample of the top-line messages that can be used for each objective/activity. Further messages are developed within individual campaign plans. These ambitions, objectives and narrative are further supported by our council brand.

Our goal is simple and true; 'Make Sevenoaks a great place for everyone'

We have a lot to be proud of. We're doing a good job, but we don't put our feet up and sit back. That's just not us. We're ambitious. We strive for better. We're not satisfied with the status quo, happy to maintain the mediocre and plod along doing things the way we've always done them.

But we don't make changes for change sake either. We want to provide excellent services at great value so we're looking for the most efficient and effective ways to get things done.

However, it's not without its challenges. With more than 70 services from environmental health to council tax and parking, our remit is wide. Add the 119,000 customers including residents, business owners and government departments you can see the challenge we've got on your hands.

There is one thing we have in common - our customer focus. At the heart of every community are the people who live and work there, it's these individuals who run businesses, shape opinion, bring creativity and breathe life into our community. Without them, we wouldn't be here. It's our job to serve those individuals and businesses as best we can, because they make Sevenoaks the great place it is today.

We want everyone who comes into contact with Sevenoaks District to have the same great experience. To do that we need to ensure that we are all working towards this goal. Our jobs and services may differ widely, but we all have the same vision to make Sevenoaks a great place for everyone.

That means empowering our people to do the best job they can. Just as our community is made up of individuals, so too is our team here at Sevenoaks District Council. It's the individual members of staff who make things happen and we want to do whatever we can to empower our teams to make decisions, solve problems and improve services.

With this in mind, we can each step up and live out our council plan promises and serve those living and working in Sevenoaks district by transforming our services and building a safe and thriving community.

<p>We have a lot to be proud of</p>	<p>First council in the country to become self-sufficient of central government funding.                  We have gone from receiving a grant of over £5 million just a few years ago to no grant funding at all in 2018.                  We have made big savings in bureaucracy and reduced our costs.                  We have increased our income by investing in property and projects that the whole District benefits from.                  Through innovation and tough choices, we have protected our services for all residents.                  These achievements are widely recognised in local government and beyond.</p>	<p>Corporate internal campaign to align employees, councillors and partners.</p>
<p>We are ambitious for the communities we serve.</p>	<p>We continue to deliver excellent services, to the highest quality, always ensuring the very best value.</p>	<p>Corporate external campaign on The Promises</p>
<p>Wellbeing is the focus of everything we do</p>	<p>We want residents to lead long, happy and healthy lives, and our businesses to thrive and prosper.                  We are working to ensure our communities have suitable homes to live in, within a safe, healthy and protected environment.                  We are supporting a strong local economy that provides the jobs and services we need.</p>	<p>Internal and external</p>
<p>So, we promise</p>		

Environment	<p>To protect our high quality natural environment, including the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and biodiversity that form our unique character.</p> <p>We will take action to reduce waste, and maintain our weekly rubbish and recycling collection.</p> <p>We support high standards for new development, including design, safety, connectivity to services and transport and neighbourhood links; open up our countryside so people enjoy our footpaths and bridle paths more.</p> <p>Health is a major consideration in our Local Plan.</p>	Local Plan Rubbish services lol
Economy	<p>We will build on the district's thriving economy through the regeneration of our market towns, and by enhancing both the visitors and rural economies.</p> <p>We will protect the economy of the District by preserving and making better use of existing employment sites and by redeveloping previously used land.</p> <p>Support new and existing businesses through our 'Team around your business' services, delivering excellent customer service and supporting local employers to promote mental and physical wellbeing at work.</p>	The regeneration story Team around your business
Housing	<p>We will deliver X new homes including affordable housing and homes for older people.</p> <p>We protect the local identities of our neighbourhoods, ensuring residents will be safe, healthy and proud of the area in which they live and work.</p> <p>Supporting the development of dementia friendly towns and villages across the District so older people can enjoy independent living for as long as possible.</p> <p>Prevent homelessness and support our residents to build a future for themselves.</p>	Housing strategy deliverables HERO services

Community Safety	<p>We will build strong connected neighbourhoods where residents feel proud of where they live and have a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Support the Districts voluntary and community organisations to reach vulnerable and isolated residents.</p> <p>Protects our residents by making sure that all of our policies, partnerships and teams are working together to safeguard people and communities.</p>	The community plan Newsletter and Twitter account
Health	<p>Provide adaptations to people's homes to prevent hospital admissions from falls and accidents.</p> <p>Prevent delays to hospital discharge by adapting homes quickly so people can be supported to return to independent living as soon as they are clinically ready.</p> <p>Provide support to tackle the non-medical reason why people visit their GP or hospital, helping them to make and sustain the changes needed to lead healthier lives.</p> <p>We deliver first class wellbeing services, supporting residents to make healthy choices, and linking them to our core services such as leisure and housing.</p>	One You HERO service
	First stage is to create an animation of the council plan image then insert our big data around service delivery and start to create the narrative around how we are delivering our promises.	TBC on approach. Capability in-house

## 5.5 Key messages

We innovate to deliver value for money excellent customer experiences  
More tbc

Our approach to delivering effective communications will;

- Focus on delivering successful, proactive, high quality communications led by our 6 key programme of campaigns
- Ensure we are using the full range of communications tools and channels
- Focus on outcomes not outputs using OASIS campaign development methodology within our Communications Briefs
- Put insight, measurement and evaluation first to measure the impact of communications activity
- Target our communications effectively
- Be social on social media and not broadcast messages
- We aim to ensure that 80% of our communications work is proactive and planned.

## 6. How we communicate

6.1. The council uses a number of communication channels including;

- In Shape - our quarterly magazine for residents and businesses
- Website
- Local, regional, national and trade/industry media
- Our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked-in profiles
- Marketing materials
- Public notices
- Advertising - newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio and Facebook

- Signage
- Events, roadshows and displays
- Door drops
- Reports and policy documents
- Council meetings and minutes
- Email marketing (not yet) - add to action plan 202/21
- Senior management meetings and council staff meetings
- Vehicle livery
- Environments (internal and external)
- Via partner organisations channels and sites.

Internal

- All staff meetings
- 121's
- Team meetings
- The intranet
- Messenger
- Grapevine
- Noticeboards



As well as evaluating and enhancing existing communication channels, there is the opportunity to develop new ones that will enable the public and elected members to engage with the council in a variety of new ways. This will be needed to deliver the priorities in this strategy. In particular, digital technology offers many opportunities to facilitate channel shift and the ability to engage with communities through a variety of social media channels and tactics, targeted email marketing, Facebook and internet marketing, the use of video and web chat. It can also help develop two-way communication with our staff through a new intranet.

## 6.2 Proactive Media

To communicate and promote the work and achievements of the council, the communications team will;

- Continue to encourage service leads and relevant managers to inform the Communications Team at the earliest opportunity of any potential good news stories and developments within their service areas.
- Package news opportunities to the media in an effective, easy-to-communicate way, including researching, writing and issuing of media releases on a regular basis.
- This may involve the requirement to include video footage, the arranging of photo calls, offering relevant interview/photo opportunities to the media, the use of relevant graphics or CGI etc.
- In the case of all proactive good news stories, in a timely manner, post these stories to the corporate social media accounts and relevant service accounts, and place in chronological order on the news section of the council's website.
- On a regular basis, ensure that staff and elected members are kept informed of news stories appearing within the local, regional and national media and trade press.

## 6.3 Reactive Media

In the age of openness and transparency, the media, as a facet which residents utilise to communicate with the council, have every right to challenge, and hold to account the council, if and when levels of service fall below that which residents expect from the council. The prevalence of social media also means that reactive media, and the need to deal with adverse comments, has vastly accelerated the speed at which adverse news can travel to a large number of people. Inevitably, 'bad' news stories always generate more interest from the media - and the very nature of local government services makes it easily open to criticism. We will continue to counterbalance and effectively

manage these negative news stories to ensure that news is communicated in a balanced, accurate and timely manner. In order to be best placed to manage reactive media relations, the team will:

- Continue coordinating responses to the media, by highlighting the importance of reputation management across the organisation, to ensure that media enquiries are dealt with efficiently and in an open and transparent manner
- Continue to build working relationships with local, regional and national media.
- Continue to utilise media monitoring tools to allow for greater identification of negative and potentially incorrect information circulating within comments on media owned websites and social media channels, blogs, forums etc and allow for corrective action to be taken
- Highlight to service leads and managers the importance of communicating potential areas of impending negative/difficult situations which are likely to give rise to media interest/potential criticism from residents.
- Where time allows, comprehensive media management strategies will be developed to ensure that correct information is supplied in a timely manner.

We aim to:

- Communicate and promote the council's achievements, details of service delivery, policy developments, etc, to residents and other key audiences, through utilising the media, both traditional and digital, locally, regionally and nationally where relevant.
- To ensure media journalists, press reporters and community reporters seeking information and/or comment from the council receive accurate and timely responses to queries.
- To act to protect the council's reputation in an honest and open way by monitoring and responding to negative or damaging comments or incorrect information
- To further utilise digital media, e.g. website, social media, video etc, to ensure that council news and information is generated, delivered, managed and responded to swiftly and efficiently.
- To continue to build positive relationships with press and media colleagues to maximise publicity opportunities and continue to develop trust and understanding of deadlines, confidentiality and council/media policies.

## 6.4 Crisis and Emergency Communications

The Communications Team provide cover in an emergency situation, but an out of hours on call facility does not exist within the council's Communications Team. This will be reconsidered over the coming year to evaluate the requirements of this facility.

We aim to:

In the event of an emergency situation, the communications team will play a key role in:

- Helping to make sure, through regular, timely communication, that public safety is of paramount importance
- Identifying at the outset which emergency service, where appropriate, is the lead authority and ensure that appropriate messages are used to direct people to the relevant channel of that service, so as to avoid conflicting and confusing messages
- Acting swiftly in the dissemination of appropriate information to both the media and residents and answer queries in an open, honest and transparent manner,
- Acting as a bridge between the organisation and the public, ensuring that available communication channels are utilised appropriately, effectively and regularly
- Utilising internal communication channels to ensure that council staff, elected members and partners, as required, are kept regularly informed with appropriate information.

## 6.5 Digital Communications

We will continue to use digital communication to ensure good engagement with residents, deliver excellent customer service, encourage people to channel shift to a more cost effective channel in their dealings with us, and to facilitate the wider sharing of information on services and issues that are most important to customers.

One way to ensure we do this effectively, is by using social media strategically - ensuring it is well researched, well planned, regularly monitored and closely evaluated to ensure that it is working.

We are already managing customer enquiries via social media in our customer solutions team. We also now offer an online chat facility for our customers.

The council's corporate website was redesigned and launched recently to facilitate self-service.

The use of video is increasing within the council, to meet customers' needs to consume information in an engaging and easy to understand way. This work can be undertaken by the Communications Team, although staff within the team will not be expected to deliver videos of a high quality nature - this work will be outsourced, but instead, and with subsequent training and equipment, can carry out basic, short videos that can be provided to the media and placed on social media.

We will:

- Become more strategic in our use of social media, to be clear on our objectives - whether they are to increase engagement and reach, deal with customer service enquiries or promote our services - or all of the above
- Build in time to innovate on those platforms and activities which are more likely to deliver results and positive outcomes.
- Ensure time is given to benchmarking and looking at best practices from other organisations to achieve results from social media
- Ensure social media channels are measured and evaluated monthly and fed back to SMT and Cabinet
- Update our training based on requirements.

## 6.6 Campaigns

By creating integrated communication campaigns we ensure that;

- Aims, objectives, outcomes and a targeted approach are identified as a minimum at the outset.
- Detailed communication plans will be produced for more complex and potentially controversial campaigns
- According to the governance structure set out in this communication strategy, that SMT backing has been approved
- Appropriate resources i.e. budget and staffing are in place and that the campaign has an imperative to achieve real change

- Advice and guidance is provided in relation to the overall approach and individual communication activities and messages making up the campaign
- Value for money is at the heart of each integrated campaign and that all alternative communication techniques and channels relevant to the desired audience and outcome have been explored
- Clearly defined evaluation measures are built into the process

The desired outcomes from each individual communication campaign supports the ambitions and objectives of the council as set out in The Council Plan Services and departments requesting campaigns must;

- Have clear evidence/requirement/research for the campaign plan
- Seek and gain approval from the relevant SMT member for work to be undertaken, according to the governance structure set out in this communication strategy
- Complete a Communications Brief template outlining evidence/requirement/research, aims, objectives and desired outcomes, together with confirmation of resources i.e. budget, staff assistance
- Adhere to the advice and guidance provided by the Communications Team in regards to communication activities
- Agree to defined evaluation measures to ensure that value for money is achieved and lessons can be learnt in regards to communication activities

We aim to: Provide a full communication service which align with The Council Plan.

### **Corporate Publications**

In-shape magazine is distributed to 55,000 households four times a year. It is not suggested that this should be discontinued, it could be produced in a different format to reduce costs. No decision should be made on the future of the magazine without first establishing residents' opinions on it, as well as more generally establishing how residents would like to be communicated to and the frequency of this. An increasing number of councils are turning to email marketing to communicate with residents and subscribers on a regular basis so to encourage channel shift we will investigate options to develop an e-marketing solution and offer residents the opportunity to receive the magazine by email.

We aim to; provide the right information to our residents and other stakeholders in the right way at the right time

### **Consultation & Engagement**

Now more than ever it is important to engage with residents - public expectations are raising but trust in institutions is falling. In this context effort to involve and understand residents is needed. By grasping what people need and what they can do for themselves, we can work better with communities and be more efficient. By bringing people in on decision-making, councils can get decisions right, manage expectations and improve relationships with residents.

Currently consultations are predominantly carried out on proposed changes to individual services. Individual services periodically conduct surveys to assess performance, however, there is no generic, on-going engagement or consultation about public perceptions of the council and its general performance, how people feel about Sevenoaks as a place, what residents think their council should be prioritising, or how they would like to contact or receive information from the council.

We aim to:

- Ensure that when we say we will engage with our communities, that this involves, where appropriate, representatives from all parts of the district, of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, vulnerable groups, difficult to reach, users of specific services, businesses, partner organisations and the media.
- Recognise that different levels of consultation and engagement are appropriate in different circumstances, dependant on;
  - The purpose of the engagement
  - The stage in the project planning cycle at which engagement takes place
- Those we are engaging with - recognising that different groups and individuals have different preferences

### **Brand Management**

Poor branding distances our services and confuses customers. These guidelines are an important tool for employees and external suppliers such as printers, publishers, video producers, graphic designers or other people who are contracted to produce or reproduce promotional material for us. The Communications Team is responsible for managing our brand.

We aim to:

- Always present a strong brand identity, on all communication materials and channels, to clearly and consistently identify the organisation and its key messages to stakeholders
- Ensure that all parts of the organisation are aware of the brand guidelines and adhere to the agreed brand identity guidelines.

### Internal Communications

Grapevine is a monthly newsletter emailed to every employee. A new intranet is being developed providing opportunities for employees to collaborate and access information about Council priorities and policies. Quarterly all staff briefings, 121's, team meetings, noticeboards, social club and internal campaigns on safeguarding, mentoring, coaching and training all contribute to highly motivated team members.

There is no process for communicating with councillors on a regular basis.

We aim to:

- Develop an effective communication channel which allows staff and Elected Members access to timely information on the councils' ambitions, objectives, key messages and actions. This system should enable top down, bottom up and peer to peer communication
- Reinforce that staff engagement and internal communication is just as important as communication to other stakeholders
- Encourage two-way flow of communication in an open and transparent way.

### 7. Monitoring & Evaluating

Currently it is not possible to benchmark performance. In some areas there has been little or no performance monitoring other than KPI's and specific surveys and questionnaires around the needs of customers in relation to a specific service and the performance of that service.

The council social media accounts, website all provided metrics that will allow us to determine benchmarking standards against which we can measure our performance and set realistic targets and goals for improving communications across the council. We will continue to monitor and evaluate these. To ensure that we are achieving our communication priorities we will also monitor and evaluate them through various methods including conducting the following;

- Annual residents' survey/public perception survey? Or a short text survey following calls?
- Elected members survey on communication

- Staff survey on communication
- Individual satisfaction surveys with customers on services
- Annual survey on council publications, and continuous invitation to feedback on each edition in order to improve content
- Liaise with our District based partners to gain access to any relevant data or survey results they may hold or information fed through from forums and groups.
- Develop closer relationships with communications colleagues in partner organisations to share experiences and channels for relevant activities.

This will allow us to benchmark performance and SMART objectives to be set for 2020/21. All campaigns will include clear objectives and evaluation data. A monthly dashboard will summarise communications activity during 2019/20.



## Appendix A - Communication Action Plan

Timescale	Area of work	Activity
2019/20	Council Plan	<p>Develop a campaign plan to launch the council plan internally. Also launch with Councillors.</p> <p>Develop an infographic or animation that takes the creative execution of the Council Plan on to inspire officers to deliver the plan. Engage employees in the values. Short video</p> <p>Take a multi channel approach utilising all staff email from Pav, update screensavers, celebrate success to date, all council meeting, managers briefings, team meetings, etc.</p>
	Brand management	<p>Refresh brand guidelines to align with the Council Plan. Web accessible version of the logo, new wellbeing and location photography style, new guidance on language and tone of voice,</p> <p>Include social media promotion on all printed material to channel shift</p> <p>Produce a quick guide version for managers.</p>
	Introduce online communications, design and print system	<p>Develop new process for commissioning communications, design and print support using the Prismadirect canon product (tbc invested).</p> <p>Co-create with officers.</p>
	Social media plan	Create a social media plan and share with colleagues to update
	Events plan	Create an events plan and share with colleagues to update
	Digital Communications	Undertake a monthly evaluation of social media accounts using a number of specific metrics. Set a number of KPIs and develop a format to feedback to SMT and Cabinet by way of a dashboard or infographic.
		Review the council's social media accounts. Take steps to either address or delete failing accounts. Review services or activities where successful social media accounts could be developed. Share best practice between successful accounts and failing ones.

Timescale	Area of work	Activity
2019/20		Continue to use social media advertising, ensure its part of campaign planning and links to other communication activities.
		Review the numerous tools that can be used on social media to help engage better and improve content such as live streaming, memes, GIFs, infographics, video, twitter polls, twitter chats - concentrate on those that can give the best results in line with our objectives
2020/21		Develop and produce a Digital Communications Plan to set the objectives, direction, activity and overall strategic management for digital media, to help us achieve our communication and engagement outcomes
		Develop relevant KPIs for the media/social media function and undertake regular evaluation against them. This should then be available as a communications dashboard to show delivered as well as upcoming activity to Strategic Directors, service leads and Cabinet on a monthly basis.
		Develop and communicate a governance structure and process for the allocation, approval and sign off of all campaign activity, to be approved by the Council Leader and SMT
		Re-design in-shape to align with council promises. Invite residents to join our email list.
		Investigate email & text marketing functionality option.
		Assess the requirement for campaign toolkits to deliver further efficiency savings.
		People strategy; attract new employees

## LG INFORM

### Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 28 November 2019

Report of	Chief Executive
Status	For consideration
Key Decision	No

Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Peter Fleming
Contact Officer	Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

**Recommendation to Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee:** That the report and presentation on LG Inform and LG Inform Plus be noted.

**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure Members are aware of the data and information that is available to them through the LG Inform and LG Inform Plus websites provided by the Local Government Association.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 This report provides Members with information about two services provided by the Local Government Association which enable Council Members, Officers and residents to access data and information about local areas and public services.
- 2 In addition to the information provided in this report, Officers will provide a presentation at the Advisory Committee meeting illustrating how the sites can be used to help Members in their role as a Councillor.

### LG Inform

- 3 The LG Inform website focuses on providing a benchmarking service for a range of key performance, contextual and financial data for local authorities. LG Inform brings this together in an online tool at <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>
- 4 Using LG Inform enables Council Officers and Members to view data from over 4,000 individual items and make comparisons between their authority and other councils or groups of councils. Using a gov.uk email address you can register to use site. Being a registered user enables LG Inform to be tailored to present information to suit your own needs by making reports and by bringing several data items together. The data is maintained by the LGA and updated quickly after being published at its source.

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- 5 The data available ranges from population data, to statistics about health and crime, to the performance of local services such as the amount of waste collected or the time taken to process benefit applications.
- 6 LG Inform is also open to the public. The public can view any of the 4,000 data items and see key information for their council.

### LG Inform Plus

- 7 Sevenoaks District Council subscribes to the LG Inform Plus service. It allows greater access to more detailed information, and effective use of the data enables a better understanding of business challenges and performance.
- 8 Alongside providing data and information on our District, it also provides information about data retention standards and the power and duties of local government. LG Inform Plus is available online at <https://lginformplus.org/>
- 9 LG Inform Plus contains more than 8,000 regularly updated data items from 45 different data sources. The data covers topics such as health, finance, crime and other public services. Being a registered user enables you to view maps and reports holding data about local areas, all of which can be tailored to meet individual needs.
- 10 While LG Inform allows comparison of an authority's area with others, LG Inform Plus looks within a local authority's borders, providing information for each ward and smaller areas of geography. This can then be compared with other wards regionally and nationally

### Key Implications

#### Financial

There are no financial implications to this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal or risk implications related to this report.

#### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

**Appendices** None

**Background Papers** None

**Dr Pav Ramewal**  
**Chief Executive**

## CAPITAL PROJECTS & REGENERATION

### Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 28 November 2019

Report of Chief Officer People & Places

Status For consideration

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer Lesley Bowles, Ext. 7430

**Recommendation to Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee:** that the update on capital projects and regeneration is noted.

**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure Members are aware of the current position of the Council's capital and regeneration projects and proposals for the Sevenoaks District.

#### Introduction and Background

- 1 At the last meeting of the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee the Portfolio Holder advised that White Oak planning application would shortly submitted and it would need to be considered by the Development Control Committee for a decision.
- 2 It was further advised on progress with proposals for Meeting Point in Swanley, that plans were being developed for Bevan Place and it was hoped that the show home in Burlington Mews would be finished in December.

#### Update on capital projects and regeneration

- 3 The planning application for the proposed redevelopment of the White Oak Leisure Centre was submitted on 18 October 2019 and validated on 29 October. Further information about the proposal is available on the Council website at [https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20077/sports\\_and\\_leisure/417/new\\_leisure\\_centre\\_for\\_swanley](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20077/sports_and_leisure/417/new_leisure_centre_for_swanley).
- 4 The application is currently open for comments until 22 November 2019. The decision on the application is due in February 2020.
- 5 Progress continues to complete the development of Burlington Mews in Sevenoaks Town. At the time of writing Members of the Committee were



**Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee - Work Plan 2019/20 (as at 8/11/19)**

28 November 2019	27 February 2020	Summer 2020	Autumn 2020
Communications Strategy Capital Projects & Regeneration LG Inform			Budget 2021/22: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

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