

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY UPDATE

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee - 19 February 2019

Report of Pav Ramewal - Chief Executive

Status For Consideration

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

Recommendations to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee:

That the update on the Communications Strategy is noted.

Introduction and Background

- 1 At the last meeting of the Policy & Performance Advisory Committee, held on 29 November, Members considered a report on the Communications Review conducted by a Peer Team from the Local Government Association between 3 and 5 September last year.
- 2 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.
- 3 The Peer Review team concluded that Sevenoaks District Council has a strong communications base and a clear appetite to succeed.
- 4 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. It is the Peer Teams view that by implementing these recommendations the council will be able to build on its strong communications base to deliver even greater impact.

Update on progress

- 5 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 will appoint a highly experienced communications professional to provide support to the Communications Team on a temporary basis.
- 6 The contract for the work will enable an individual with the right experience to come in to the Council and work with Officers and Members to deliver on the recommendations of the Peer Review team and re-shape the Council's communication service to deliver on its aspirations for a more strategic focus. The contract will be focussed on delivering a new Communications Strategy and improved ways of working to be implemented, for Officers to develop their knowledge in relation to strategic communications and to put in place training plans to continually develop the skills within the team, across the Council and for Members.
- 7 It is anticipated that this work will begin no later than April and continue for approximately three months. In timing the work in this way it is hoped that much of the initial fact finding and research is completed in advance of the District Council elections, enabling Members to be a part of the review from May onwards.
- 8 In addition to bringing in the necessary support to assist with the improvement of the service and the team Officers are continuing to focus on the recommendations that were identified as 'quick wins'. However, it is evident that many of the recommendations will be best implemented when a new Communications Strategy is in place and new working practices are agreed and implemented following the advice of the external support that will be bought in to the team.
- 9 The Communications Team are continuing to make improvements to the annual communications plan and are making more use of digital marketing to reach residents who may otherwise not see or hear important Council communications. Learning from the success of the digital campaign for the One You service, the Communications Plan to encourage voter registration will also feature targeted digital communications.

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 will appoint a highly experienced communications professional to provide support to the Communications Team on a temporary basis. The contract will be focused on delivering the recommendations of the Peer Review and the Council's determination for a more strategically focused communications function. This report is for Members' information and it is recommended that the report is noted.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

[Communications Peer Review report](#)

Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive