

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

28 January 2014 at 7.00 pm
Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

AGENDA

Membership:

Chairman: Cllr. Fleming Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Dickins
Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Neal, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and
Miss. Thornton

	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Apologies for Absence		
1. Minutes To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 December 2013, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. Declarations of Interest Any interests not already registered		
3. Actions from Previous Meeting	(Pages 5 - 6)	
4. Update from Portfolio Holder		Cllr Fleming Tel: 01732 227180
5. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
6. Human Resources Update	(Pages 7 - 12)	Syreeta Sandhu Tel: 01732 227403
7. Communications Strategy and Working Group Report	(Pages 13 - 28)	
8. LG Inform	(Pages 29 - 32)	Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
9. Residents Survey 2013 - Results	(Pages 33 - 46)	Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
10. LGA Peer Challenge - Feedback letter		Jim Carrington-West Tel: 01732 227286

To follow

11. **Work Plan**

(Pages 47 - 48)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(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.)

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you require a copy of this agenda or any of the reports listed on it in another format please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team as set out below.

For any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact:

The Democratic Services Team (01732 227241)

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Abraham, Neal and Miss. Stack

Cllrs. Eyre and Fittock were also present.

19. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee meeting held on 3 December 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

21. Presentation on the Residents Survey Results

The Chairman had agreed to take the following presentation as an urgent item. The urgent matter was taken as Agenda item 2(a).

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman advised the Committee he had agreed to accept an urgent matter – ‘Presentation on the Residents Survey Results’.

The matter was urgent because the results of the resident survey needed to be considered by the Advisory Committee to ensure that they can inform the work of the Committee’s working group. The results were not available until after the publication of the agenda.

The Head of Transformation and Strategy and the Communications and Consultation Manager gave a presentation of the results from the Residents’ Survey. The survey was carried out over the telephone, by an independent company and received 201 responses.

In response to questions, the Communications and Consultation Manager confirmed that there had been a positive change in attitudes to public services and the Council’s reputation had improved since the last survey in 2010. A question in the survey asked how helpful residents found the Council the last time they contacted it. The

Agenda Item 1

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee - 3 December 2013

Communications and Consultation Manager was unsure how many respondents had answered this question, but would be able to provide the information to Members after the meeting. He also confirmed that there were service specific questions which ensured the responses were in relation to the District Council.

Action 1: That the Communications and Consultation Manager inform Members how many responses were received to the survey question relating to helpfulness the last time they contacted the Council.

In response to further questions, the Communications and Consultation Manager explained that residents were informed of the cost to produce InShape, which was less than the cost of a second class stamp at 21p. Concerns were raised whether residents knew how the Council's services provided value for money and whether it was something that could be quantified.

Members questioned how our score compared with other local authorities. The Head of Transformation and Strategy confirmed that some of the questions asked could be benchmarked though LG Inform which is being developed by the Local Government Association (LGA). As soon as it is available the information would be fed back so that it can be compared to other Councils.

Action 2: The full report to be added to the work plan for the next meeting and the full report to be shared with the Communications Strategy Working Group.

22. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance reported that he had attended the Scrutiny Committee for the second time. The Corporate plan had been finalised and the Peer Challenge Review was underway. The Peer Challenge Review was looking at savings, asset buying, supplement revenue budget, a focus on customer service and investment in businesses in the District.

Some projects in the Corporate Plan would be taken forward early next year. Some of these included the provision of long stay parking in the District and this would be taken forward to other Advisory Committees. Another project was for Swanley to be included in the Zone 6 London Travel Card boundary. This had been initially discussed with Kent County Council. The Leader reported that he would directly contact Transport for London, Michael Fallon M.P and Boris Johnson, Mayor of London.

23. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

24. Annual Complaints Report 2012/13

The Customer Services Manager presented a report which updated Members on customer complaints and feedback monitoring for the year 2012/13, as compared to 2011/12 and provided projected figures for 2013/14.

In response to a question, she explained that customers could go straight to the Ombudsman with their complaints however, it had been their general practice to refer

complainants back to the Council to go through the Council's own complaints procedure first. A Member questioned the meaning of the word 'settlement'. It was confirmed that it was not necessarily a financial settlement but upholding and admitting a mistake made.

Members felt that customers may not know the Council's complaint procedures and what was defined as a 'formal complaint.' The Customer Services Manager explained that there was a document on the Council's website and a leaflet available in reception which each department had a copy of. All Contact Centre staff were also trained in the complaints procedure. The definition of a 'formal complaint' was at Officer's discretion however, if correspondence was received with the words 'formal complaint' then it would be dealt with as a Stage 1 complaint. If concerns were raised in the correspondence then it would be dealt with as a Service Request which the Service Manager would respond to.

In response to questions, the Customer Services Manager explained that although the number of Stage 1 complaints received was increasing, it was something that had been anticipated with the Welfare changes coming into force earlier that year. The number of Stage 1 complaints for Local Tax was consistent. There was a decrease in Stage 2 and 3 complaints which showed that customers were satisfied with the outcomes of their Stage 1 complaints.

The Customer Services Manager explained that if a resident went to a Member with a complaint then they could be referred to the Council and it could be dealt with through the complaints procedure. She also explained that when a complaint is made to the Council the complainant was asked if they would like their local Councillor copied into correspondence, however this could only happen if they gave their permission. In response to a question from a Member regarding what assistance could Members provide to help reduce complaints, the Customer Services Manager offered to meet with the Portfolio Holder and look at potential ways that the Committee could be involved to help reduce complaints.

Action 3: That the Customer Services Manager have a meeting with the Portfolio Holder to look at potential ways that the Committee can be involved.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

25. Feedback from the Communications Strategy Working Group

A short briefing note was tabled by the Communications Strategy Working Group. The agreed focus areas were: the Council's website; marketing; and to explore Members communication needs. A comparison between alternative websites and the District Council's website had been carried out. The Working Group were producing a questionnaire for all Members to take part in which would look at which communication tools the Members were using.

26. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted. The Committee agreed to add the Residents Survey results to the meeting in January 2014 and move the Annual Complaints report for 2013/14 to June 2014.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.05 PM

CHAIRMAN

ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2013			
Action	Description	Status and last updated 16.01.14	Contact Officer
ACTION 1	That the Communication and consultation Manager inform Members how many members of the public had contacted the Council to respond to the Survey.	See agenda item 9.	Daniel Whitmarsh Ext: 7414
ACTION 2	The full report of the Residents Survey results to be added to the work plan for the next meeting.	See agenda item 9.	Lee Banks Ext: 7161
ACTION 3	The full report to be shared with the Communications Strategy Working Group.	Completed.	Lee Banks Ext: 7161
ACTION 4	The Complaints report with figures for 2013/14 be added to the work plan for June 2014	This has been added to the workplan.	Amy Wilton Ext: 7280

This page is intentionally left blank

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee – 28 January 2014

Report of Head of Human Resources

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Syreeta Sandhu (Ext. 7403)

Recommendation to Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee:

Members note the work of the Council's Human Resources team over the past year.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure Members are informed of the work of the Council's Human Resources team and are able to advise on any areas they wish to see improved.

Introduction and Background

- 1 This report provides an update to Members on the key Human Resources strategies and their impacts.
- 2 The Human Resources team has played a key role in managing the result of staffing changes that continue to take place within the organisation and will continue to support the delivery of challenging future budget savings that remain to be a pressure due to the economic environment we are operating in.
- 3 The new senior management structure took effect in September 2013, with the deletion of 2 director posts and the creation of the SMT (Strategic Management Team) consisting of the chief executive and seven chief officers. The Human Resources team have worked with other teams across the council to ensure the transition to the new structure has been seamless, and that communication has remained effective and transparent. The new structure has been positively embraced by staff at all levels, and continues to go from strength to strength.

Staff Turnover

- 4 The economic downturn and reduced budgets within the public sector have led to a significant reduction in the number of vacancies arising across Local Government. This Council is experiencing similar issues with an overall reduction in the number of posts due to budget savings.
- 5 The Council has successfully implemented partnership working with Dartford Borough Council in respect of its Revenues and Benefits, Audit and Fraud and

Agenda Item 6

Environmental Health services. With one partnership operating out of its Argyle Road office, and one out of Dartford's civic centre office, the Human Resources team continue to support staff at all levels to ensure the partnerships work effectively for both councils. We are currently exploring partnerships for our Building Control team which could result in greater resilience within the team and further improve the efficient use of the Council's resources.

- 6 During this period when the council's staffing numbers continue to decrease, the requirements placed on staff are increasing. There continues to be pressure for the council to deliver more for less. In doing this, it is essential that the council is able to retain the best staff. High staff turnover is disruptive, makes it hard to maintain service standards and results in expenditure on recruitment and temporary staff.

Staff Retention

- 7 In overall terms the analysis of officers leaving the authority over the past three years shows that staff turnover has reduced slightly. The number of leavers as a percentage of staff in post has decreased from 7.8% in 2012/13 to 5.5% to the end of December 2013/14. This does not include retirement, end of casual contracts or health capability dismissals.
- 8 The average length of service at Sevenoaks District Council is a fraction over 12 years. This is a positive figure for the organisation overall as it shows the authority is a good employer with market competitive and fair benefits.
- 9 In 2012/13 the Benefits service has experienced recruitment difficulties and skills shortages. Members may be aware that it has been reported nationwide that there has been an issue recruiting to posts such as benefits assessor due to ever-imminent changes expected with the introduction of Universal Credit. This has led to people looking to leave the sector and seek other areas of work and has created uncertainty for our own staff and an increase in work loads as the Council work hard to recruit to vacant posts and adopted innovative solutions such as the capacity grid which is able to process benefit claims on the Council's behalf.

Workforce Planning

- 10 The Council is working on a revision to its Workforce Development Plan. This will better enable the authority to identify key areas of resource need and plan strategically for any skills shortages and cross training requirements over the short, medium and long term.
- 11 The Human Resources team are currently working on the delivery of a Leadership Masterclass programme for 37 managers across the organisation. The programme consists of 36 modules ranging from core to enhanced areas of learning, which will help ensure there is a consistent style of management across the organisation and that all our managers are well equipped to face any future challenges.

Managing Sickness Absence

- 12 Short term sickness in 2012/13 was reported as an average of 4.4 days per full time equivalent member of staff. This is an increase from the 3.8 days recorded

the previous year. Short term sickness to the end of November this year is recorded at 2.3 days per FTE and on target to be lower than last year.

- 13 Long term sickness in 2012/13 was reported as an average of 5.5 days per full time equivalent member of staff. This is a decrease from the 6.8 days recorded the previous year. Long term sickness to the end of November this year is recorded at 3.6 days per FTE and is likely to be at similar levels to 2012/13 come year end.
- 14 The Human Resources team with the aid of the onsite occupational health nurse, attending once a fortnight, ensure officers are seen as soon as possible after operations and long bouts of sickness to make sure a planned phased return to work is implemented. This is alongside on going support and professional medical guidance.
- 15 The onsite occupational health provision has been tailored to support officers back to work following absence for reasons such as cancer and stress or anxiety. The support and on-going professional advice being of paramount importance due to absences such as this being protected under the Equality Act 2012. A number of health and well being events have been conducted over the year, and these have led to issues such as high blood pressure and cholesterol levels being picked up at very early stages, to ensure effective intervention at an early stage.

Investing in People

- 16 The Council was reassessed and once again recognised with the Gold Award and Champion status by Investors in People. Less than 1% of organisations manage to retain both Gold and champion status, and all those involved in the assessment were delighted to learn of our award. The feedback from the assessment in relation to improvements to cross team working and communication have been built in to an action plan to ensure areas such as these can be monitored.
- 17 The New Choices approach to the Investors in People scheme allows an organisation to tailor its assessment to focus on its key business priorities. However, as in previous years the Council chose to assess itself against a high majority of all categories.
- 18 The important messages that came back from the assessment were that employees feel valued and empowered, consultation with the workforce is good, and coaching is embedded within the organisation. The assessors recommended that recognition and reward strategies could be reviewed to better enable and encourage continuous improvement.
- 19 Receiving these awards ensured Sevenoaks remains a key employer within Local Government and ensures that it continues to retain, motivate and recruit the best and most talented officers. This can be difficult in challenging economic times.
- 20 The Council successfully launched an NVQ programme in March 2012, teaming up with Synergy and Nescot College to enable 117 participants to be accredited in NVQ level 2 customer service skills. To date 87 people have successfully completed and been award for the qualification. The Council saw a tremendous amount of cross-departmental working with officers working together to complete

Agenda Item 6

their portfolios and gain their individual accreditations. The Council is the first local authority to launch and complete such a scheme.

- 21 The Council launched a coaching scheme in May 2012 aimed to increase productivity and morale through one to one sessions focused on improving performance through becoming self aware as to how to problem solve, and knowledge sharing within the organisation. To date, 40 people have accessed the twelve trained coaches within the organisation. The council hopes to train a second cohort of coaches later this year.
- 22 Staff morale and motivation were a key feature of the recent Peer Challenge which took place in December 2013. The Challenge team found that staff were productive and motivated, though they did highlight concerns in relation to capacity.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None

Key Implications

Financial

None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	There are no equality impacts arising.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable

Conclusions

- 23 The Council's recruitment and retention and sickness absence levels are likely to remain challenging in the coming year. However it is hoped through careful and effective strategic planning the overall impact will be maintained within manageable levels.
- 24 The actions of the Human Resource team in collaboration with managers throughout the organisation to address staff retention and workforce development continues to deliver significant benefits.
- 25 In overall terms the Council has ensured that in comparative terms it has maintained good levels of recruitment and retention. The Council has continued to build on its excellent reputation as a good employer.

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

**Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive**

This page is intentionally left blank

MEMBERS WORKING GROUP – COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee – 28 January 2014

Report of Head of Transformation & Strategy

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Promise in the Corporate Plan to provide value for money.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Lee Banks (Ext. 7161)

Recommendation to Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee:

Members note the work of the Members Working Group and endorse the proposals made to improve the Council's Communications Strategy.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure the work of the Members Working Group is incorporated in to the Council's Communications Strategy for 2014/15.

Introduction and Background

- 1 At its meeting of 8 October 2013, the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee resolved that a Working Group of Cllrs Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton be established to make recommendations for the Council's 2014/15 Communications Strategy.
- 2 The Working Group elected Cllr Lorraine Stack as the Chairman of the Group, which subsequently met on six occasions to set the scope of the review, research and evaluate the issues and develop their recommendations.
- 3 Members were supported by officers from the Communications Team, met with officers who manage the Council's key commercial services and carried out a survey to gather the views of Members on communications matters.

Scope of the review

- 4 At their first meeting the Members Working Group concluded that their review of the Communications Strategy would focus on three areas. These were:
 - To develop and refine the Council's 'tone of voice'. Special regard to be paid to the communication channels that impact most on the Council brand experience, namely: the Council website; Contact Centre and reception; staff; and Members;

Agenda Item 7

- In recognition of section 6 of the Corporate Plan, the Council’s long-term aspiration to become more financially self-sufficient, develop marketing plans for commercial services to generate additional income; and
 - To consider Members’ communications needs.
- 5 A summary of the work undertaken, the findings and recommendations will be presented by the Working Group at the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee meeting.
- 6 To assist with this presentation the Appendices to this report provide:
- A summary of the Communications Team, including its roles, responsibilities and budgets;
 - A summary of the Council’s commercial services;
 - The results of the Members’ Communications survey; and
 - The results of a website evaluation completed by the Working Group.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None

Key Implications

Financial

None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	There are no equality impacts arising.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or		Not applicable

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
minimise the impacts identified above?		

Conclusions

The Members Communications Strategy Working Group will present their findings to the Advisory Committee on 28 January. This report provides a summary of the remit of the Working Group and provides a range of supporting information as Appendices.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Communications Team roles and responsibilities

Appendix B – Commercial services

Appendix C – Members’ Survey

Appendix D – Website evaluation

Background Papers:

None

**Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive**

This page is intentionally left blank

Sevenoaks District Council Council's Communications Team

Prepared for the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee Members' working group
November 2013

The Team consists of:

- Communications Manager (Full time)
- Communications Officer (Full time)
- Communications and Policy Assistant (works 0.2 days a week for Communications)

In addition, the team has ad hoc graduate interns paid expenses only.

The team reports to the Head of Transformation and Strategy.

Main responsibilities:

- Media relations - issuing news releases, fielding Council media enquiries, media briefings, developing relationships with local reporters and editors, media planning
- Overall management of the Council's main website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
- In Shape magazine and other publications, including Council Tax and business rates leaflets
- Campaigns and promotions
- Managing the Council's social media platforms - Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and LinkedIn
- Corporate consultations i.e. the recent resident survey (October 2013) and budget consultations
- Managing the Council's public notices arrangements and BT book adverts
- Media monitoring, including press cuttings, and comms performance monitoring
- Communications Strategy and specific communication plans
- Annual Communications Planner
- Visual identity guide
- Overall management of inSite the new intranet (until recently this was managed by IT)
- grapeVine, internal e-mail newsletter for Council staff with access to a PC
- Direct News, internal paper-based newsletter for manual workers based at Dunbrik
- Managing the photographic database
- Managing Language Line, telephone interpretation service

Agenda Item 7

Annual budgets managed by the Communications Team

Communications budget: £147,000

Consultation budget: £3,000

Public Notices budget: £22,000 (recharged to departments who require public notice advertising)

Sevenoaks District Council - commercial services

Service area	Services provided	Current marketing activities	Restrictions (publicity and service provision)
Building Control	Building Control Service Energy Performance Certificates Fire risk assessments Domestic energy efficiency assessments	Website Proactively targeting residents/developers/agents with marketing letters once the weekly planning list has been published Seeking partnerships with local agents for new work and to retain custom	Development Services unable to promote 'in house' building control service
Household bulky waste and white goods collection	Collection of large domestic items, including white good	Website 2013/14 Recycling Guide delivered to all households	Can only provide the service District-wide
Cesspool emptying	Scheduled and emergency cesspool emptying	Website	None
Household garden waste collection	Collection of garden waste in wheeled bins or sacks every two weeks	Website, including homepage Regular features in In Shape magazine. 2013/14 Recycling Guide delivered to all households	None

Service area	Services provided	Current marketing activities	Restrictions (publicity and service provision)
MOTs	Class IV MOTs for cars and light vans up to 3 tonnes gross vehicle weight. Class VII MOTs for vans over 3.0 tonnes up to 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight MOT testing of taxi vehicles	Website	Unable to test categories for lorries, buses or motorcycles We do not repair vehicles in the event of test failure
Planning - pre-application advice	Advice for residents, developers and planning agents seeking planning consent	Website Duty planning officers	None
Print and design	Design, print, banners, wallpaper etc.	Word of mouth Existing customers	Restricted by the Goods and Services act: We are only permitted to work for other public sector bodies and charities
Commercial (trade) waste collection for paper and cardboard	Non recyclable trade waste bins Waste paper and cardboard collection in Swanley, Sevenoaks, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Sundridge, Brasted and Westerham Trade waste sacks and waste paper sacks collections	Website	Trade waste bin collections - District-wide only. Trade waste paper & cardboard - targeted to higher density areas within the District to allow most efficient service
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks formally known as CRB checks	DBS checks for any member of the public or any company requiring a DBS check	None	None

Members' Communication Survey

2013/14

Methodology

E-mail survey made available to members from Monday 16 December 2013 to Wednesday 8 January 2014.

Response Rate: 37 Members responded (69%)

Section 1: Press Cuttings

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find the press cuttings useful	(14.7%) 5	(35.3%) 12	(17.6%) 6	(11.8%) 4	(20.6%) 7
I would prefer the press cuttings to be made available electronically (via an e-mail or the Members' portal)	(40%) 14	(34.3%) 12	(20%) 7	(5.7%) 2	(0%) 0

Section 2: Members Portal

How often do you visit the Members' Portal?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Once a week (or more frequently)	38.9%	14
Once every two weeks	13.9%	5
Once a month	13.9%	5
Once every three months	2.8%	1
Less than once every three months	16.7%	6
Never	13.9%	5

Agenda Item 7

If you visit the Members' Portal, please tell us how strongly you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find the Members' Portal to be useful	(15.4%) 4	(50%) 13	(26.9%) 7	(7.7%) 2	(0%) 0
The Members' Portal includes up-to-date information to help me fulfil my role as a councillor	(0%) 0	(48%) 12	(36%) 9	(16%) 4	(0%) 1
Information is easy to find on the Members' portal	(0%) 0	(40%) 10	(36%) 9	(24%) 6	(0%) 2

How can the Members' Portal be improved?
Improve the search engine
Update the Portal more frequently, including Council news
Improve the navigation to make information easier to find

If you do not use the Members' Portal, please tell us why?
Forgotten or lost password
Other sources of information available
Do not have the necessary skills

Section 3: Members' Surgeries

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The training provided to Members by the Council helps me to do my job	(17.6%) 6	(50%) 17	(14.7%) 5	(8.8%) 3	(8.8%) 3
I am clear about the role of Parish and Town Councils, the District Council and County Council	(39.4%) 13	(51.5%) 17	(3%) 1	(6.1%) 2	(0%) 0
My constituents understand the difference between Parish and Town Councils, the District Councils and the County Council	(0%) 0	(5.9%) 2	(11.8%) 4	(50%) 17	(32.4%) 11
I understand and could explain the planning process to my constituents	(35.3%) 12	(47.1%) 16	(8.8%) 3	(5.9%) 2	(2.9%) 1
I understand and could explain the Council's Housing Allocations Policy	(8.8%) 3	(35.3%) 12	(14.7%) 5	(29.4%) 10	(11.8%) 4

Do you hold surgeries with your constituents?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	26.5%	9
No	73.5%	25

How often do you hold surgeries?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Weekly	11.1%	1
Monthly	66.7%	6
Every three months	11.1%	1
Every six months or more	11.1%	1

Agenda Item 7

Do you work closely with your Parish/Town Council representatives when hosting your surgery?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	77.8%	7
No	22.2%	2

Do you prepare your own materials when you work with constituents (not political materials)?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100%	9
No	0%	0

Are you clear when your MP should be involved with issues?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75%	24
No	25%	8

Section 4: Training

Would it be helpful if the Council provided media awareness training to Members?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	78.1%	25
No	12.5%	4
Don't Know	9.4%	3

Section 5: Sevenoaks District Council Website

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The website is clear and well designed	(0%) 0	(40.6%) 13	(43.8%) 14	(15.6%) 5	(0%) 0
In general, information on the website is easy to understand	(0%) 0	(53.1%) 17	(40.6%) 13	(6.3%) 2	(0%) 0
Information is easy to find on the website	(0%) 0	(8.1%) 9	(34.4%) 11	(31.3%) 10	(6.3%) 2

How could the Council website be improved?
Improve the search
Make Councillor contact details / roles of the local authorities easier to find
Improve navigation

Section 6: General Comments

Please tell us what, if anything, could be done to improve the way the Council communicates news and information with Members?
Provide departmental updates
Send new releases to all members electronically
Member could share more information

This page is intentionally left blank

Members Communications working group 25 November 2013

Website scores:

- **HMRC**

- When do I need to file my tax return 4 clicks (for self-assessment anyway) Score: 7
- What is self-assessment 3 clicks. Score: 8
- Do I pay tax on my pension 4 clicks. Score: 7
- Do self-employed people pay National Insurance 2 clicks. Score: 9
- How do I know if my tax code is correct multiple clicks. Score 4

- **Manchester City Council**

- What day does my bin get emptied Score: 10
- How do I pay my council tax online Score: 10
- How do I check my housing benefit Score: 9
- I have a gas leak Score: 8
- My neighbours are playing music at all hours Score: 10 and especially impressed by the search function, which predicts what your entering and gives you suggested prompts as you type

- **Sainsbury**

- Where is my nearest shop Score: 9
- What is Sainsbury Local Score: 2
- How do I shop online Score: 10
- Can I pay by cheque at Sainsbury FAIL! Score: 0
- What is click and collect Score: 8

- **Apple**

- What is a tablet FAIL! Score: 10
- What is iphone 5 Score: 8
- Does apple provide landlines FAIL! Score: 0
- How much does a new phone cost Score: 8

- **SDC**

We also asked the same questions on the SDC website that we asked of Manchester:

- What day does my bin get emptied POOR! Score: 3
- How do I pay my council tax online Score: 3
- How do I check my housing benefit POOR. Score: 3
- I have a gas leak FAIL! Score: 0
- My neighbours are playing music at all hours General advice, but there and found. Score: 5

Agenda Item 7

We also made the following observations about the SDC site:

- It's our shop window, yet is too generic. Lacks Local flavour/images. Lacks real time info, like news flashes on bad traffic, weather conditions etc
- Appears clunky in comparison to, say, Manchester's site. Poor search facility
- Too many clicks to find information
- Info not presented in a user friendly manor (e.g. bin collections for Zambra Way in Seal!)

Tone of voice scores for the various websites:

Tone of voice	HRMC	MANCHESTER	SAINSBURY'S	APPLE	SDC
friendly	X	✓	X	X	✓
warm	X	✓	X	X	X
impersonal	✓	X	X	✓	-
cold	✓	X	X	✓	X
professional	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
kind	X	X	X	X	X
hard	X	X	X	✓	X
selling stuff	X	X	X	✓	X
confusing	X	X	✓	✓	X
approachable	✓	✓	-	X	✓
distant	-	X	X	✓	X
nasty	X	X	X	X	X
threatening	X	X	X	X	X
pompous	X	X	X	✓	X
pen pushers	X	X	✓	X	-
uncaring	X	X	-	X	X
User friendly	✓	✓✓	X	X (for non-Apple users)	-
trendy	X	-	-	✓	X
jargon	X	X	X	✓	X
clear and easy to understand	✓	✓✓	X	X	✓
helpful	✓	✓✓	-	X	-
trustworthy	✓	✓	X	-	✓

Overall, the group voted that Manchester was the best example.

LG INFORM

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee – 28 January 2014

Report of Head of Transformation & Strategy

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the promise in the Corporate Plan to provide value for money.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Lee Banks (Ext. 7161)

Recommendation to Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee:

Members note the availability of LG Inform which publishes information about the Council's performance and can be used as a tool to benchmark Council performance.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that Members are aware that LG Inform, which has been developed by the Local Government Association, is available publicly and provides information about the Council's performance and can be used as a benchmarking tool.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Since the Governments decision in 2010 to reduce the burden of central government inspection and assessment of authorities, the Local Government Association (LGA) has been working with local government to develop an approach to improvement which is based on the sector's learning about what works best.
- 2 LG Inform is an online resource which brings together a range of key performance data for authorities, alongside contextual and financial information. The website has been designed for local authority users and people with a gov.uk email address are able to register to gain full use of the information within the system.
- 3 Registered users can view data a range of data about any local authority, make comparisons between groups of councils, and construct their own reports bringing information which is important to them together. The LGA strive to ensure that all relevant publically available data is added to LG Inform within three days of first publication.
- 4 LG Inform sets out to be a flexible website that can be personalised to each registered users needs. The home page can be tailored to monitor information registered users are most interested in and, in future, the ability to collect local data will be available.

Agenda Item 8

- 5 Since November 2013 publically available data held within LG Inform has been open to the public.

LG Inform at Sevenoaks District Council

- 6 The Council are currently developing reports that summarise the Council's performance against a range of measures within the LG Inform system. These will be integrated within the Council's Performance Management Framework as a way of regularly reviewing and assessing performance and acting as a challenge for future improvement. Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee will receive an update on the Council's performance management arrangements at their next meeting.
- 7 The Council is also able to add the information and graphics generated from LG Inform directly to its website to improve the transparency of its performance reporting. Currently the Council updates performance information on its website each quarter. However LG Inform provides an opportunity to add more appealing graphics and data presentations at no additional cost to the Council and is being tested on the Council's website for on going future use.
- 8 A short presentation on LG Inform will be provided at the meeting of the Advisory Committee and Members are encouraged to visit LG Inform at <http://lginform.local.gov.uk/>

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None

Key Implications

Financial

None. LG Inform is available use at no additional cost to the Council.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None. There are no legal or risk implications from the use of LG Inform.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	There are no equality impacts arising from the use of LG Inform.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of	No	

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
opportunity?		
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable

Conclusions

LG Inform is a free to use service which provides performance information about local authorities and allows them to benchmark their performance against other groups of Councils. The Council is investigating how best use can be made of the data in the system to add further challenge to its performance framework and improve the provision of performance information through its website.

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

RESIDENTS SURVEY 2013 – RESULTS

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee – 28 January 2014

Report of Head of Transformation & Strategy

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Promise in the Corporate Plan to provide value for money.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Lee Banks (Ext. 7161)

Recommendation to Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee:

Members note the results of the Residents Survey 2013 and advise on any areas of concern that should be addressed arising from the report.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that Members are provided with an opportunity to assess the feedback of residents and propose actions for improvement arising from any concerns identified from the results.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Following a tender process Lake Market Research Ltd, an independent research company, carried out a resident survey on behalf of the Council during October 2013.
- 2 The survey was carried out to provide information on satisfaction with the Council and also to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's communications and to establish where residents obtain information about the Council.
- 3 A number questions within the survey were taken from the Local Government Associations (LGA) LG Inform project, a tool which is being developed by the LGA as a benchmarking data service for local authorities, which may in time allow benchmarking with other, similar authorities.
- 4 Overall the results are positive showing significant improvements in satisfaction levels with the Council compared to the last telephone survey undertaken in 2010. This report sets out the results of the survey and identifies potential areas for improvements and further research.
- 5 Where it exists, comparative data has been included in this report.

Agenda Item 9

Methodology

- 6 The data was collected by way of a telephone survey of 201 Sevenoaks District residents. Collectively they formed a broadly representative sample of the District population.
- 7 Research took place from 16 to 30 October 2013. Some telephone calls took place during evenings and at weekends to ensure we heard the views of a representative, cross-section of our District population. All the telephone numbers were randomly generated.
- 8 The research was conducted under the Code of Practice of the UK Market Research Society, which means that all of the answers residents gave remain strictly confidential and anonymous.
- 9 The results are presented in percentage form, and compared to the corresponding results from the 2010 telephone survey where available.

Council Performance

- 10 Overall satisfaction with councils is an important performance measure for many local authorities and has been collected through surveys for many years. The Council's survey showed an improvement in satisfaction with the way the Council runs things of 18% since 2010.

2013 result	2010 result
88%	70%

- 11 From the limited amount of recent benchmarking data currently available to the Council the satisfaction scores of other local authorities ranged from 58% to 84%, indicating that the Council is performing strongly in this area.
- 12 The Council's survey asked for responses to four further questions that reflect on performance. These are set out in the table below.

Question	2013 result	2010 result
Trust in the Council	80%	Not available
Helpfulness the last time you contacted the Council *	80%	66%
The Council acts on the concerns of local residents	72%	32%
Would speak positively of the Council	42%	31%

* 115 responses were received to this question. Those respondents had all contacted the Council within the last 12 months.

- 13 Across these questions it is evident that the Council has improved its performance since 2010. Benchmarking data is not currently available therefore it is difficult to assess whether the 2013 results represent strong performance within the local government sector.
- 14 The proportion of residents that would speak positively of the Council although improved is significantly lower in percentage terms than other results within this Council performance section. The results of the survey showed that 10% of respondents would speak negatively, with 47% with no strong view.
- 15 Any future research carried out by the Council may wish to consider exploring in further detail the experiences of residents that most influence their opinions on the Council. This would in turn allow for improvement plans to be considered for services as well as improvements in how the Council communicates with residents about its services.

Value for money and budget

- 16 Residents opinions on the value for money provided by councils is an important performance measure for many local authorities and has been collected through surveys for many years. The Council’s survey showed an improvement in its value for money score of 8% since 2010.

2013 result	2010 result
58%	50%

- 17 From the limited amount of recent benchmarking data currently available to the Council the value for money scores of other local authorities ranged from 42% to 56%, indicating that the Council is performing strongly in this area.
- 18 The Council’s survey asked for responses to five questions that reflect on the priorities for the Council’s budget setting. These are set out in the table below.

Question	2013 result
Seek new opportunities to work in partnership	91%
Invest money and resources to generate income to help fund services	85%
Look for further efficiency savings	84%
Charges for services should at least cover costs	79%
Increase Council Tax to continue to deliver services	27%

- 19 In essence the majority of respondents support the Council’s approach to managing its money. There is a high level of support for the Council’s emerging plans, as set out in the Corporate Plan to invest money in projects that generate

Agenda Item 9

income for the Council. Just over a quarter of respondents recognise that council tax raises may be necessary to continue to fund service delivery.

- 20 Despite seeing a rise in the Council's value for money score it has been expressed by Members and Strategic Management Team that they would wish to see this score improve further. To this end improvements will be sought in the way in which we communicate the work of the Council, within the financial constraints placed up on us in recent years, with residents. This will be reflected in the Communications Strategy for the coming year.

The local area

- 21 Residents were asked about how satisfied they are with their local area as a place to live. This question reflects on the whole range of services and factors that influence the quality of a local area and not just the services provided by the District Council. The Council's survey showed a reduction in satisfaction levels of 4% since 2010.

2013 result	2010 result
89%	93%

- 22 The survey asked respondents what they perceived to be the biggest problems in their local area. The table below summarises the responses received.

Perceived problem	2013 result
Rubbish or litter	30%
Vandalism and graffiti	25%
Groups hanging out	22%
People using or dealing drugs	16%
Drunk or rowdy people	13%
Noisy neighbours	11%

- 23 The responses to the survey have been shared with relevant services to enable them to assess the measures currently being taken, or those that could be taken in the future to address the concerns raised. Further research may be required to understand more about where these issues most predominantly occur.

Communications

- 24 An important message to gauge the effectiveness of the way the Council communicates is to assess how well residents feel that they are kept informed about its services. The 2013 survey showed an improvement in the proportion of residents that feel they are well informed of 7% since 2010.

2013 result	2010 result
71%	64%

- 25 To understand more about the types of Council communication that residents see and therefore what may influence their level of satisfaction with being informed about services the survey asked which sources of information residents have seen within the previous six months. The results are set out in the table below.

Source of Information	2013 result	2010 Result
In Shape magazine	73%	69%
Council website	44%	36%
Council’s social media feeds	4%	Not available
Leaflets	1%	Not available

- 26 The results of the survey indicate the most effective form of communication, or that with the greatest reach, continues to be In Shape magazine. However this is a greater growth in the use of the website to find information about services. Work is underway to improve the way information is provided on the Council’s new website and its growth as a communication tool provides a level of support for this project.

In Shape Magazine

- 27 In Shape magazine is produced for residents and local businesses four times a year. The magazine is designed, printed and distributed to over 50,000 homes and businesses at the net cost of 21p per copy. As the source of information about the Council that residents tell us they see most, further questions were asked to understand more about residents opinions on the magazine.
- 28 The survey asked whether residents had seen the September 2013 copy of In Shape, which was distributed four weeks prior to the survey taking place. 69% of respondents had seen the magazine, 17% responded that they hadn’t and the remaining 14% were unsure.
- 29 56% of respondents to the questionnaire told us that they spent up to 10 minutes reading there copy of In Shape, 39% said that they spent more than 10 minutes reading In Shape and 5% said that they didn’t read it at all.
- 30 The following table summarises respondents’ views on the quality of In Shape.

In Shape ...	2013 result
... is easy to read	97%
... is colourful and well produced	96%
... keeps me informed about the Council's work and local services	91%
... informs me of Council news and activities I have not previously heard about	88%
... tells me about the Council's future plans	88%
... is good value for money *	86%

* - Respondents to the questionnaire were informed of the cost of In Shape before responding to this question

- 31 The responses on the quality of In Shape are very positive and supportive of the current design and approach taken to content.

Campaign Evaluation

- 32 During September and October the Communications team managed a media campaign on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership to promote the work they do to keep the District safe. To evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign respondents were asked if they had heard about the primary objectives of the campaign. The results are summarised as follows:

- 40% of respondents knew how to report anti-social behaviour and other crime to the District's Community Safety Unit;
- 38% of respondents had heard about the Council's work with the community to reduce speeding vehicles (Speed Watch);
- 34% of respondents had heard about how the Council's CCTV system is helping to keep the District's town centres safe;
- 33% of respondents had heard about the Council's work with its partners to keep the District safe; and
- 16% had heard about the Council funded projects to tackle drug and alcohol misuse and domestic abuse.

- 33 For a campaign that ran across a 5-6 week period to gain recognition from up to 40% of the respondents is a satisfactory outcome. Work will continue to evaluate what works well and what can be improved from previous campaigns to ensure that every effort is made to maximise reach and recognition levels in the future.

Learning from the Members Communications Strategy Working Group will help officers to achieve this aim.

Information provision and Media

- 34 The survey concluded by asking a range of questions about how residents receive their news and their preferences for local and national media. A summary of the results is provided at Appendix A for Members information.
- 35 The information from this section of the survey helps to guide the Council on where to place their news or announcements to ensure the greatest reach.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None

Key Implications

Financial

The telephone survey of 200 respondents was at a cost of £3,371.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The survey collects anonymous information about the individuals that respond to the questionnaire. Analysis of this data enables the Council to explore whether any inequalities may exist from the responses given by different categories of individual.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable

Conclusions

- 36 Over the past three years the levels of satisfaction with the Council have increased to the point where it has one of the highest scores in the country based on our own, limited, benchmarking exercises. Our data may be more readily comparable

Agenda Item 9

once other local authorities support the LGA's LG Inform programme to share their survey data.

- 37 The Council's Value for Money score is increasing (in 2010 50% of respondents said that we provided value for money, whilst 58% said this for 2013). While this compares well with others, there is still room for improvement.
- 38 More people feel well informed by the Council (71% in 2013 as opposed to 64% in 2010) and this may be one of the drivers for the improvements in satisfaction and value for money.
- 39 The Council's website is now the primary source by which residents get their information from about the Council. The influence of the local media, while still important, shows a decline as a useful information source about the Council.
- 40 Satisfaction levels with the Council magazine, In Shape are high and those who read it are generally more satisfied with the Council than those who do not.
- 41 The vast majority of residents have broadband at home. Furthermore 72% have an internet enabled phone. Social media use has continued to grow amongst Sevenoaks District residents.

Appendices: Appendix A – Survey Results – Media

Background Papers: None

**Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive**

2013 Residents Survey

Information provision & Media

Respondents found information about Sevenoaks District Council from:

	2013 survey	2010 survey
Council website	44%	35%
In Shape - the Council's magazine	41%	67%
Local newspapers	24%	68%
Leaflets	23%	53%
Friends, neighbours and relations	22%	47%
Town or Parish Council newsletter	20%	Not available
Contact with Council staff	15%	26%
Leaflet that comes with the council tax bill	14%	47%
Radio	8%	19%
Posters	8%	Not available
Television	6%	16%
National newspapers	6%	19%
Councillors	5%	10%
Residents' Association/community group	5%	25%
Public meetings	3%	13%
Social media (Facebook and Twitter)	1%	Not available
Other	4%	5%

Agenda Item 9

Respondents' first choice communication channel to find out about what Sevenoaks District Council is doing:

	2013 survey	2010 survey
Council website	42%	37%
In Shape - the Council's magazine	22%	35%
Contact with Council staff	10%	11%
Leaflets	6%	27%
Leaflet that comes with the council tax bill	5%	5%
Town or Parish Council newsletter	5%	Not available
Local newspapers	4%	46%
Social media (Facebook and Twitter)	1%	Not available
Friends, neighbours and relations	1%	5%
Television	1%	3%

Media

How the media has viewed Sevenoaks District Council in the last few months:

	2013 survey	2010 survey
Positively	44%	34%
Negatively	7%	13%
Neither positively nor negatively	48%	54%

Local newspaper read in the last month:

	2013 survey
County Border News	8%
Dartford or Gravesend Messenger	9%
Dartford and Swanley News Shopper	17%
The Reporter	2%
Edenbridge Chronicle	9%
Kent and Sussex Courier	7%
Kent on Sunday	9%
Sevenoaks Chronicle	38%
The Vine Magazine	19%

National daily newspapers read in the last seven days:

- Daily Mail, 25%
- The Sun, 18%
- Daily Telegraph, 14%
- The Times, 13%
- Guardian, 7%
- The Mirror, 6%
- Daily Express, 5%
- Metro, 5%
- London Evening Standard, 4%
- Daily Star, 3%
- The I, 2%
- Independent, 2%
- Financial Times, 1%
- Other, 1%
- Do not read a national newspaper, 31%

Agenda Item 9

News programmes watched in the last seven days:

- BBC1 national news, 59%
- BBC South East Today, 42%
- ITV1 national news, 22%
- BBC London, 18%
- Sky News, 16%
- ITV London, 15%
- Channel Four News, 12%
- BBC News 24, 9%
- ITV Meridian News, 9%
- Newsnight, 7%
- Daybreak (GMTV News), 4%
- Five News, 4%
- Other news programmes, 4%
- None of these, 13%

Radio stations listened to in the last seven days:

- BBC Radio 4, 25%
- BBC Radio 2, 18%
- BBC Radio Kent, 18%
- Heart, 14%
- Magic, 14%
- BBC Radio 1, 13%
- Capital, 13%
- Kiss FM, 13%
- Absolute Radio, 9%
- Classic FM, 8%
- BBC Radio 3, 7%
- BBC Radio 5 Live, 7%
- KMFM, 6%
- LBC, 4%
- XFM, 3%
- Smooth, 2%
- Talk Sport, 2%
- BBC Radio 1xtra, 1%
- BBC Radio 6, 1%
- Other, 5%
- None of these, 14%

Internet and smartphones

Internet and smartphones use in the District:

- Wireless broadband at home, 81%
- Internet at work, place of study or elsewhere, 53%
- iPhone, 34%
- Android phone, 21%
- Other broadband at home, 16%
- Other internet enabled /smartphone, 17%
- Other mobile phone, 3%
- None of these, 2%

Use of social media

Social media use in the District:

- YouTube, 57%
- Facebook, 48%
- Google + (Google plus), 32%
- LinkedIn, 22%
- Twitter, 16%
- Instagram, 12%
- Pinterest, 5%
- Other Social Media Site, 2%
- None of these, 23%

This page is intentionally left blank

Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee Work Plan 2013/14

28 January 2014	TBC March 2014	June 2014	October 2014	December 2014
Workforce & HR Equality LGA Peer Challenge Response Policy 3 Communications Strategy and Communications Plan Working Group Report LG Inform Residents Survey 2013 – Results	Business Transformation Performance Management Update Equalities Update Democratic Services (Governance Committee) Implications on DS following Peer Challenge Recommendations	Performance Indicators & Targets for 2014/15 Annual Complaint Monitoring 2013/14 Members & Democratic Services	Annual Customer Services Update Report (information item)	

This page is intentionally left blank