

01 March 2016 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks  
Despatched: 22.02.16



# Policy & Performance Advisory Committee

## Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Fleming; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Miss. Stack  
Cllrs. Abraham, Clark, Eyre, Kelly, Krogdahl, Maskell, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parkin and Thornton

## Agenda

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b> To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2015, as a correct record	(Pages 1 - 6)	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b> Any interests not already registered		
3. <b>Actions from previous meeting (if any)</b>		
4. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		Cllr Fleming
5. <b>Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)</b>		
6. <b>Residents Survey 2015</b>	(Pages 7 - 10)	Daniel Whitmarsh Tel: 01732 227
7. <b>Communications Strategy</b>	(Pages 11 - 28)	Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
8. <b>Swanley Local Office</b>	(Pages 29 - 32)	Amy Wilton, Jim Carrington-West Tel: 01732 227280/7286
9. <b>Transparency and website update</b>	(Pages 33 - 36)	Lee Banks, Amy Wilton Tel: 01732 227161/7280

10. **Work Plan**

(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 227247 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

**POLICY & PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Miss Stack (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Clark, Eyre, Krogdahl, Maskell, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parkin, and Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Kelly

Cllrs. Grint were also present.

CHANGE IN AGENDA ITEM ORDER

With the agreement of the Committee the Chairman put agenda item 9 before the update from the Portfolio Holder.

20. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2015, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

22. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

23. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

24. Property Disposal Update

The Head of Economic Development and Property presented the report which sought approval to the disposal of surplus property assets at Shacklands Road, Badgers Mount. Disposal of surplus and underperforming assets will generate capital receipts that can be reinvested in higher performing assets in accordance with the Council's approved Property Investment Strategy.

The Committee was addressed by a local Member who explained that the woodland provided noise and pollution screening for the residents of Badgers Mount. He expressed

## Agenda Item 1 Policy & Performance Advisory Committee - 26 November 2015

concerned that the ancient woodland would not be protected if it was sold to neighbouring properties and the value of the land was more important to the residents of Badgers Mount. He hoped discussions between the Council and the Parish Council could take place.

Members discussed measures that were being proposed to protect the trees including a restrictive covenant and Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). The Head of Economic Development and Property advised that if a TPO was breached it was possible that a fine per tree affected could be applied.

Members considered whether discussions should be entered into with Badgers Mount Parish Council for a period of 6 months to see whether they would be interested in purchasing the land. It was noted by Members that similar discussion had taken place with Westerham Town Council regarding land in Crockham Hill.

The Chairman moved that it be recommended to Cabinet that the Council enter into discussions with Badgers Mount Parish Council for a period of 6 months for the disposal of the surplus land at Shacklands Road and authorises the Head of Economic Development and Property to agree detailed Heads of Terms.

### 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 the Council enter into discussions with Badgers Mount Parish Council for a period of 6 months for the disposal of surplus land at Shacklands Road, Badgers Mount and authorises the Head of Economic Development and Property to agree detailed Heads of Terms.

### 25. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Policy & Performance updated the Committee that the work on the website was progressing and showed Members example pages from the new website. The new website was user friendly and by registering for log on details it would personalise resident's experience. Members were also advised that the Head of Economic Development would be leaving the Council in January and the Chairman expressed his thanks for the work undertaken.

### 26. Budget: Review of service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the report before the Committee was the second stage of the budget process and would be presented to all Advisory Committees. The first stage had been the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy' report which had been reported to Cabinet on 17 September 2015. The purpose of this report was to ensure that all Members of the Advisory Committees had a role to play in the governance of the Council and the budget decision making process and to make suggestions to Cabinet on growth and savings ideas for the services within their terms of reference.

The main message was that this should be a significant step towards the Council becoming financially self-sufficient. The 10-year budget at Appendix F to the report, included no Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from 2016/17 and no New Homes Bonus (NHB) from 2019/20. In practice it was likely that some funding would still be received from these sources in the near future but the amounts were unknown. The Financial Prospects report had recommended that any amounts that were received were placed into the Financial Plan Reserve which could be used to support the 10-year budget by funding invest to save initiatives and support for the Property Investment Strategy (PIS). Using the funding for these purposes would result in additional year on year income that was not impacted by Government decisions.

Members had agreed the last 10-year budget in February and the changes that had been made since then included:

- Rolling the 10-year budget on for one year and updating base figures.
- Removing reliance on RSG
- Reducing the Council Tax increase assumption to 2% for all years
- Reducing fees and charges inflation to 2.5% for all years
- Reducing pay award inflation to 1% for 4 years
- Including income from PIS for the first time of £500k from 16/17, £700k from 18/19, £800k from 23/24
- Savings of £500k in 16/17 and then £100k pa for all future years

The current list of growth and savings proposals was £52,000 short of the £500,000 target (if all of the proposals were accepted), and Members were therefore being asked for further suggestions for growth and savings ideas. He further reminded Members that £5.3m had been saved from 2011/12 to 2016/17 (113 items) and there had been over £10m of savings since 2005/06.

Members reviewed Appendix D which contained the growth and savings proposals put forward by the Portfolio Holders and Chief Officers, and the Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) in Appendix E and E(a).

Members considered whether there was anything they wanted taken forward as potential growth or savings suggestions.

Members discussed the positives and negatives of paperless meetings. The Chairman advised that more work would need to be carried out on current systems before paperless would be compulsory for Members.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the growth and savings proposals identified in Appendix D to the report applicable to the Advisory Committee (SCIA 1 – Economic Development &

## Agenda Item 1

### Policy & Performance Advisory Committee - 26 November 2015

Property: staffing establishment levels made permanent, SCIA 13 – Increased print income and SCIA 20 – Pay costs savings) be recommended to Cabinet;

b) Cabinet investigate meetings of the Council being paperless.

#### 27. Local Government Devolution

The Chairman presented a report which provided the background to, and a brief summary of, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, outlining the current progress nationally and suggesting that the Council considered engaging with Government over what could be achieved locally as it achieved a self-sufficient budget position. The Chairman advised that it was hoped that Sevenoaks District Council would lead the way being self sufficient with other District Council's following and to focus on income that could be budgeted for.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report be noted.

#### 28. Swanley Regeneration

The Chairman presented a report which sought approval of the demolition of redundant premises at the Former Swanley Working Men's Club, 18 High Street, 27 to 37 High Street and Bevan Place Car Park, Swanley. Development of the sites would generate income and capital receipts that can be reinvested. High quality development would serve the needs of the town and improve an important area of the town, thus supporting the Council's Economic Development strategy. It would also result in higher performing assets in accordance with the Council's approved Property Investment Strategy. Members were advised that the properties in their current state were being vandalised and that it was a hard site to keep secure.

#### 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 the demolition of redundant premises at the Former Swanley Working Men's Club, 18 High Street, 27 to 37 High Street and Bevan Place Car Park, Swanley be approved, subject to a detailed appraisal of the VAT implications.

#### 29. Work Plan

It was agreed to invite Jadu, who were producing the Council's website to the March meeting if the new website was not live prior to the meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.55 PM

CHAIRMAN

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## RESIDENTS SURVEY 2015

### Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Meeting - 1 March 2015

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Cabinet - 21 April 2016

Key Decision: No

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**This report supports the Council's promise to provide value for money**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Fleming

**Contact Officer** Daniel Whitmarsh Ext. 7414

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#### **Recommendation to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee:**

To note the results of the 2015 Residents Survey

#### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

To note the results of the 2015 Residents Survey

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**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure that Members are aware of the views and opinions of residents as collected from the 2015 Residents Survey.

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#### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 During October 2015 Lake Market Research Ltd, an independent research company, carried out a resident survey on behalf of the Council. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the level of satisfaction with the Council and its services, the effectiveness of the Council's communications activities and to establish where local people obtain information about the Council.
- 2 A number of the core questions were taken from the Local Government Associations (LGA) 'LG Inform' database, a tool which has been developed by the LGA as a data benchmarking service for local authorities.
- 3 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.

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- 4 Research took place from 24 October to 2 November 2015. Some telephone calls took place during evenings and at weekends to ensure the Council heard the views of a representative, cross-section of the District population. All the telephone numbers were randomly generated.
- 5 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.

### Residents Survey Results

- 6 Officers will provide a presentation for Members at the meeting of the Committee to set out in more detail the results of the Residents Survey. The views of residents in relation to satisfaction, trust and value for money are important measures for the Council and are summarised as:
  - Overall satisfaction with the way the council runs things remains exceptionally high at 79%. Nationally 67% of residents are satisfied with their local council.
  - 59% of residents believe the council provides value for money; this is a small increase from 2013 (58%) and again higher than the national benchmark of 51%.
  - Trust in the Council currently runs at 74%, considerably higher than the national benchmark of 58%.
- 7 Although there is some disappointment that the Council has seen some fall in ratings since the last survey in 2013, overall the outcome of the survey is positive for the Council, particularly when placed in the context of the continued reduction in available resources for local government and the general reform of public services that has taken place in recent years.
- 8 It has been a challenging time for local government to retain its reputation and the trust of its residents. However, when compared to recent national data published by the LGA the Council continues to be one of the strongest performers nationally for important measures such as overall satisfaction, trust and value for money.

### Communications

- 9 An important element of the Resident Survey is to find out information about how residents wish to access our services, how they keep informed about what the Council does and how the Council can best communicate with them.
- 10 Overall, 70% of those surveyed feel the Council keeps residents well informed about services; this is a 1% fall from 2013 but once again higher than the national benchmark. In Shape continues to be the communication that was most seen by residents in the 6 months prior to the survey, as opposed to the Council website or other forms of social media. Overall

satisfaction with In Shape magazine is high with 85% of respondents finding it value for money, 98% easy to read, and 92% well produced.

- 11 There is a significant rise in the number of respondents who said In Shape was used by them to find out information about the Council. In 2013 this was 44%; in 2015 this was 72%. There have been substantial rises across all forms of communication used by residents in this regard, including local newspapers, and town and parish council newsletters; however the first choice communication channel is the Council’s website, although the proportion of residents stating this has reduced from 2013 and 2010.
  
- 12 Members may also wish to note that YouTube and Facebook have gained in popularity as the social media platforms residents are most likely to use. The Council is seeking to develop its own YouTube channel with a focus on providing advice to residents through “how to” videos to help increase accessibility and understanding of Council services and to allow those that wish to more effectively self-serve.

**Key Implications**

Financial

None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications arising from this report. Failure to review and act on the feedback of residents creates a risk that the Council will see its reputation reduce.

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**

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## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### Policy and Performance Advisory Committee - 1 March 2016

Report of: Chief Executive  
Status: For Consideration  
Also considered by: Cabinet - 21 April 2016  
Key Decision: No

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**This report supports the Council's promise to provide value for money**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Fleming  
**Contact Officer** Lee Banks Ext. 7161

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#### **Recommendation to Policy & Performance Advisory Committee:**

Cabinet are recommended to adopt the Communications Strategy.

#### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

The Council's Communications Strategy is adopted.

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**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure that the Council's Communication Strategy is in accordance with Members priorities and is making the most effective use of the Council's resources.

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#### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 Communications activity across local government has seen a significant rise in profile in recent years as Councils continue to manage the impact of funding cuts. As a result local authorities have sought to increase dialogue with their residents, local businesses and other stakeholders to prioritise savings and efficiencies that reflect community wants and needs, and also ensuring the community is well informed about services and the value provided by the local authority.
- 2 The Council's Communication Strategy has been reviewed in recent years, with the significant support of a Members Working Group, to reflect the changing priorities for the Council and has been improved to clearly reflect the purpose of all communications activity for the Council and set a clear framework for the remit of the Communications team.

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- 3 In response to this changing environment for local authority communications it is considered important that Members consider and comment on the current strategy (provided as Appendix A).
- 4 Members may also wish to consider the proposed work plan (provided at Appendix B) that will support officers to deliver the aims and objectives set out in the strategy. The work plan should reflect the significant projects the Council will undertake during the coming year and highlight work required within Council services to ensure strong communications with customers.

### Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 5 None.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

- 6 None. Delivery of the Communications Strategy and work plan as set out are within the existing financial resources allocated to the communications function.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 7 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The risk of not having a properly considered and documented strategy and work plan for communications activity may result in resources being directed at areas that are not a priority for the Council.

#### Equality Assessment

- 8 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

- 9 The Communications Strategy and Work Plan are reported to Members for their consideration and to ensure that the focus of the Communications team is appropriate and in priority areas for the Council.

### Appendices

Appendix A - Communications Strategy

Appendix B - Communications Work Plan

### Background Papers:

None

**Dr Pav Ramewal**  
Chief Executive

# Sevenoaks District Council

## DRAFT Communications Strategy



## Communications Strategy

This strategy sets out how the Council will communicate effectively with its residents, local businesses, stakeholders, staff and Councillors, especially during a time of budget reductions and a drive towards financial self-sufficiency.

The strategy is updated as necessary to reflect emerging issues, shifting priorities and developments in best practice.

We are always interested in ways to improve our approach to communications and welcome your suggestions.

Contact us

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Sevenoaks  
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Facebook sevenoaksdc

Publication details

Purpose of the  
Communications Strategy

To ensure that the Council communicates the right information to its customers, its staff and its Councillors at the right time and in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

Publication date  
February 2016



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## 1. Background & Introduction

### Introduction

The Communications Strategy sets out Sevenoaks District Council's approach to communications.

This strategy and the Communications Team's work plan builds on the achievements of previous corporate communications objectives and work plans, which introduced improved ways of working.

First and foremost, this plan has the aim of maintaining the current high levels of satisfaction and trust with the Council.

But this is a time of change in the communication landscape with electronic and social media becoming a powerful, cost effective medium at the Council's disposal. This strategy will help ensure the Council better utilises these technologies.

A greater emphasis will also be put on visual identity to ensure output is consistent and conforms to the Council's Brand Guidelines.

### Council Vision & Promises

The Council's Communications service has one common goal - to maintain the reputation of the Council by implicitly and explicitly communicating the Council's vision and promises – its corporate narrative.

The Council's vision can be summarised as:

“Pride in the District of Sevenoaks by working with the community as a whole, to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving local economy.”

The Council's promises are to:

- Provide value for money
- Work in partnership to keep the district of Sevenoaks safe
- Protect the Green Belt
- Provide the high quality services residents want
- Support and grow the economy

The principal aim of this strategy is to set a clear framework that enables the Council to effectively communicate activity against these promises and work undertaken to deliver the vision for the District.

In a time of unprecedented financial pressure and change, it is important to build trust with local people, local businesses and community leaders. The Communications Team is there to support the Council in being transparent and explain what service changes are taking place and why; the reasons why and benefits to the community of achieving financial self-sufficiency; that statutory and high priorities are being defended and delivered well in a period of financial austerity.

## 2. Communications at Sevenoaks District Council

### The Communications Team

Responsibility for Communications falls within the Portfolio for Policy & Performance. Cllr Peter Fleming, the Leader of the Council, is the current Portfolio Holder.

The Communications Team is one of the smallest teams in the County for the responsibilities it holds.

Communications is part of the Transformation & Strategy Team and the team comprises of:

- 1 FTE Communications Manager
- 1 FTE Communications Officer
- 0.2FTE Policy and Communications Assistant and
- Graduate Interns on an ad-hoc basis.

The Communications Team is supported by a Corporate Communications Group. The Group meets throughout the year, acting in a planned and proactive way to deal with communication issues and to advise and support Strategic Management Team and other staff about relevant matters.

Task and finish groups are formed to support individual projects or to review and improve communications activity across the Council.

### Our Responsibilities

Main responsibilities of the team include:

- Oversight of the Council's website
- Production and editing of In Shape, the Council's resident and business magazine
- Management of the Council's social media presence on Twitter, Facebook, Streetlife, Pinterest and LinkedIn
- Media relations
- Campaigns and marketing and
- Internal communications, including the intranet.

### Value for money services

The Communications Team is determined to deliver a low cost, high quality communications service to the Council.

The team is committed to:

- Working smarter
- Maximising capacity
- Sharing resources
- Shared working across organisations
- Partnership working and
- Raising income

## 2. Communications at Sevenoaks District Council (continued)

### Working with Councillors

All roles within the Communications Team are apolitical.

The team will only advise Councillors on media relations and will not suggest content for media releases.

The democratic mandate (elected Councillors) is what makes Local Government different among public services. The Communications Team tells the Council's story to the media and acts as an advocate for the local community.

The Communications Team has clear objectives when determining its strategy for working with Councillors. These are:

- Officers must be apolitical
- To provide support to Councillors in their role as community leaders and as advocates for the Council
- To provide support to both the decision making and scrutiny functions
- To support and advise all Councillors regarding the media
- To always inform and be transparent with Councillors, demonstrating to the local community that they have a strong voice in important decisions.

Within the Council's governance arrangements it has been agreed that Councillors will have an active role in the Council's communications. These are as follows.

### ■ Cabinet – Leader & Portfolio Holders

These Councillors are accountable for many day-to-day Council decisions. Some decisions will be taken collectively by the Cabinet and others by the Leader of the Council or by individual Cabinet Portfolio Holders. In all cases, decisions will need to be recorded and published on a regular basis. The Leader and Portfolio Holders will be the 'public face' of the Council and will be the first point of reference for comments on key decisions.

### ■ Advisory Committees, Scrutiny, Standard & other committees

From time-to-time, issues can arise when these committees, other than Cabinet, make recommendations or take decisions which require a formal Council comment. In these circumstances it will fall to the relevant chairman to make such comment either orally or within a news release prepared by officers.

Further information and detail is available within the Council's 'Public and media relations guidelines'.

## 3. Reaching our audience

### Our audience

The Communications Team's primary audiences are local residents, local businesses, Councillors and staff.

External communications and effective media relations help to promote the Council's value for money credentials and advertise the breadth of services it provides.

Effective internal communications assist with retaining staff as advocates during a time of change in public service funding.

In addition, the Government audience is essential because a good reputation of a Council or an individual service can aid opportunities to secure external funding and enable the Council's voice to be more clearly heard on the national stage.

### Reaching our audience

#### ■ Residents

The 2011 census recorded Sevenoaks District Council as having a population of 114,893, occupying 47,020 homes.

- 51.5% of the population are female;
- The average age in the District is 41;
- 19% of the population are aged over 65; and
- The BME population makes up 4.2% of the District.

It is the Communications Team's objective to communicate the Council's Vision and Promises and its ambition to become financially self-sufficient. In doing so it will explain the services the Council provides and underline the level and quality of services provided.

The Communications Team will approach this through campaigning and a balanced mix of media and marketing using the following communications methods:

- Effective branding;
- Effective media relations;
- Campaigning through multiple media channels;
- Using In Shape, the Council's magazine;
- Direct marketing; and
- Social media.
- Businesses and landlords

At 1 April 2015 a total of 3,788 business properties were listed for Sevenoaks District.

The District has a diverse mix of businesses and it is a priority to help them grow as well as looking to bring new ones into the area.

The Communications Team's objective is to communicate the Council's promise to 'support and develop the local economy'. In doing so the team will seek to encourage businesses and landlords to invest in the District, be supportive of economic development and growth in the right areas and promote sustainable employment for local people.

The Communications Team will approach this through targeted media and marketing events and seeking to create new opportunities for dialogue with businesses. To do this the Team will work in partnership with the Council's Economic Development and Property Team, and use the following communications methods:

- Effective media relations
- Email newsletter for businesses
- Campaigning through multiple media channels
- Publicising Council involvement in local business meetings and events and
- Marketing and publishing.

■ Stakeholders

Services are provided across the Sevenoaks District by a wide range of service providers including town and parish councils, Kent County Council, Police, Fire, Health services and numerous third sector and charity organisations. The Council wants its stakeholders, including Councillors, partners and the local media, to be advocates for the Council.

The Communications Team’s objective is to communicate the Council’s vision and promises, but also to empower and engage people in supporting the Council’s Communications Strategy.

This will be achieved by direct communication, by seeking participation in council communications activity and providing media style briefings on important issues through traditional communications routes.

■ Staff

The Council employs around 350 full-time equivalent staff. It is critical to the Council’s performance that staff are engaged in the overall direction of the Council and are highly satisfied in their work.

It is the Communications Team’s objective to communicate the Council’s Vision and Promises.

In doing so the Team will make it clear how services and individuals make a contribution to achieving the Vision and Promises.

Through our communication with staff the Council aims to empower staff to promote the quality of services and uphold the Council’s reputation. Our last Staff Survey told us that 82% of staff talk positively of the Council to people outside of the organisation, with the remaining 18% saying they talk neither positively or negatively.

The Communications Team’s will approach this through sustaining excellent communications, delivering the Council’s key messages and providing positive examples of achievements towards the Council’s vision and promises.

The Communications Team will use the following communications methods:

- grapeVine email bulletin for all staff
- Direct News bulletin for staff working at the Dunbrik depot
- Using In Shape, the Council’s magazine
- inSite, the Council’s intranet
- Staff Briefings and meetings and
- Notes from Strategic Management Team meetings.

## 4. Measuring our results

### Maintaining the Council's reputation

A telephone survey is undertaken every two years by an independent research company asking a range of questions, including some formulated by the Local Government Association.

The survey found that resident satisfaction with the Council was 79%. This is believed to be one of the highest scores, if not the highest, of any council. The most recent national figure for satisfaction with the local Council from research conducted by the LGA is 67%.

Trust in the Council currently measures 74% (set against a national figure of 58%)

The same survey also found that 59% of residents believe that the Council delivers Value for Money. Nationally the value for money score for local Councils is 51%.

The challenge for the Council and the work of the Communications Team is to sustain high levels of satisfaction with the Council and sustain the proportion of residents who feel the Council delivers value for money.

### Targets and outcomes

In assessing the performance of the Council's Communications Team the following targets and outcomes will be measured against the life of this strategy.

- 1) Maintain the reputation of Sevenoaks District Council as an organisation that has integrity, provides good value quality services and improves local residents' lives.
- 2) A focus on media relations that is targeted and supports two/three campaigns per year.
- 3) A target of 90% balanced or favourable coverage in the local print media.
- 4) Greater adoption of electronic communication channels to engage better with residents, Councillors and staff.
- 5) Targeted consultation, which empowers residents and the business community to inform and influence Council policies and services.

## 5. Additional Information

### Links to plans and strategies

The Council's Communications Strategy is closely aligned to the commitments in the Council's vision and promises. It is also designed to compliment and support a number of other Council plans and strategies. These include the:

- Corporate & Service Plans
- Human Resources Strategy
- Equality Commitments and
- IT Strategy.

### Guidance for officers

Further communications guidance is available on inSite, the Council's intranet. This information includes:

- The Communications Team's current work plan
- Publicity and media guidelines; and
- Advertising Policy.

### Guidance for Councillors

Further communications guidance is available to Councillors from the Council's Communications Team. This information includes:

- The Communications Team's current work plan
- Publicity and media guidelines; and
- From the Council's Constitution (Appendix W) 'Guidance on the Disclosure of Confidential Information by Councillors'.



# Sevenoaks District Council

## DRAFT Communications Strategy

If you have any comments about this document or require further copies, please contact:

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February 2016



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## Communications Team work plan

Action	Milestones	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)
Provide communications planning and support for the delivery of Council projects (including increased parking capacity, hotel development and Swanley & Hextable Masterplan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop communications plans as a contribution to the Council's project plans</li> <li>■ Provide ongoing communications support and act as single point of contact for media enquiries</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Project Lead Officers
Support the development of the new Council website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review content, develop the new site, train and support staff</li> <li>■ Work with teams to identify and produce transactional services</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Customer Services Manager Communications Manager
Communicate the developing local plan and successes in the planning team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Explain the challenges and issues facing the District as the Local Plan develops, in particular around the need for new homes</li> <li>■ Communicate successful planning enforcement cases</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Communications Officer Communications Manager
Review accessibility of In Shape and the Council website for people with learning difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with Community Futures to establish if any changes should be made and, if so, implement them</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Customer Services Manager Equalities Officer

Action	Milestones	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)
Maximise opportunities for generating income from communications activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Introduce an advertising plan, which covers In Shape magazine and other Council assets</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Communications Officer
Promote services that generate income, in particular pest control and MOTs, supporting the Council aim to become financially self-sufficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Produce new marketing plans for services</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Communications Officer Relevant service areas
Develop a proposal to produce an e-mail newsletter for residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Draw up a proposal to send a monthly e-zine to residents who have subscribed to the newsletter</li> <li>■ Work with the Customer Services Team and others around the Council to develop a database of residents for the newsletter</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Communications Officer Customer Services Manager
Improve communication with Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Contribute and support the development of a new intranet or portal for Members</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Democratic and IT Services
Media relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Continue to work proactively with the local media to promote Council news and activities and to respond to media enquiries in a timely manner</li> </ul>	On-going	Communications Manager Democratic Services

Action	Milestones	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)
Greater integration of social media platforms across the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the Customer Services Team as it takes over responsibility for responding to customer service requests via social media channels</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Manager Customer Services Manager
Enhance the Council's social media and online presence with the use of short videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase suitable filming equipment and upskill the Communications Team to produce videos for a web-based audience</li> <li>Work with the corporate group producing videos to help customers use and apply for our services</li> </ul>	31 March 2017	Communications Officer Communications Manager
Run campaigns to support the delivery of Council and service objectives. (Including new materials collected for recycling and economic development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop campaign templates, deliver campaigns and evaluate outcomes</li> </ul>	On-going	Communications Manager Communications Officer Relevant service areas

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## SWANLEY LOCAL OFFICE

### Policy and Performance Advisory Committee - 1 March 2016

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Support

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Cabinet - 3 March 2016

Key Decision: Yes

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Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Amy Wilton Ext.7280 & Jim Carrington-West Ext.7218

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#### Recommendation to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee:

It is recommended to Cabinet that the renewal of the provision of a Local Office service for a further 2 years with Swanley Town Council based on the current terms and value is approved.

#### Recommendation to Cabinet:

Renewal of the provision of a Local Office service for a further 2 years with Swanley Town Council based on the current terms and value is approved.

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**Reason for recommendation:** A partnership agreement has existed for fourteen years between Sevenoaks District Council and Swanley Town Council for the operation of services through a local office in Swanley. The current agreement expires on 31 March 2016 and Members approval is sought for the District Council to seek to continue this arrangement and to renew the agreement to end on 31 March 2018.

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#### Introduction and Background

- 1 The Swanley Contact and Information Centre provides information and services on tourism and Council services. The office was a joint partnership operated by Swanley Town Council under the direction of the District Council until August 2015. From August 2015 the office was re-branded as Swanley Link and now operates under the direction of Swanley Town Council, with an agreement between Kent County Council and West Kent Housing Association. District Council services continue to be provided by Swanley Town Council.
- 2 Customers use the local office to access District services such as the regular benefits surgeries, held twice a week, and run by the Sevenoaks District Council Benefits team (using facilities provided as part of this contract), to

## Agenda Item 8

purchase refuse sacks and to contact the Customer Services team through a dedicated telephone line.

- 3 For the last full year of the agreement (2014/15) performance information related to District Council services provided at the Swanley Local Office was:
  - 480 customers seen at the Benefits surgery;
  - £854,229 of payments taken through the Handitill; and
  - Customer satisfaction levels at 91%.
- 4 From March 2016 it is planned that the handitill machine which enables customers to make cash payments for Council Tax and Housing Benefit overpayments will be removed from the Swanley Link. From this point the District Council will commence a new contract with Allpay which will enable customers to make payments at Post Office counters and PayPoint outlets throughout the district and wider.

### Swanley Local Office agreement

- 5 The District Council allocates a budget of £49,719 per annum for the provision of services at the Swanley Local Office.
- 6 It is therefore proposed that Members approve that the District Council seek to enter in to a new agreement for the provision of District Council services provided by Swanley Town Council at Swanley Link for a period of 2 years from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018.
- 7 Subject to Members approval it is proposed that in seeking to reach an agreement with Swanley Town Council for the provision of services the annual cost will remain within agreed budgets.
- 8 Members may wish to note that the District Council will request that clear District Council branding is sited throughout Swanley Link as part of the agreement to provide services.

### Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 9 None.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

- 10 It is anticipated that the renewal of the Local Office contract with Swanley Town Council would commit the Council to expenditure in the region of £99,000 over the next 2 years. This is in line with the current annual spend on the Local Office service.



- 11 Subject to Member approval to enter in to agreement with Swanley Town Council Officers will ensure that the Council's contract procedure rules are adhered to.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 12 An updated Partnership Agreement will need to be executed between the Town Council and the District Council subject to agreement of the annual fee.

Equality Assessment

- 13 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**

- 14 The provision of a Local Office in Swanley to enable residents in the north of the District to access Council services is valued by residents. It is recommended that Members approve the renewal of its agreement with Swanley Town Council in line with the current terms and value.

**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Jim Carrington-West**  
**Chief Officer Corporate Support**

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## WEBSITE & TRANSPARENCY UPDATE

### Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Meeting - 1 March 2016

Report of: Chief Officer Corporate Support

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

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**This report supports the Council's promise to provide value for money**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Fleming

**Contact Officers** Amy Wilton Ext. 7280 & Lee Banks Ext. 7161

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#### **Recommendation to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee:**

To note the progress made in the delivery of a new Council website

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**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure that Members remain aware of the progress being made in the delivery of a new website for the Council.

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#### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 During 2014 the Council set out a number of corporate projects that it wanted to achieve to support the commitments it made within its Corporate Plan. These projects included one focused on the customer experience which incorporated the delivery of a new council website.
- 2 Members have received regular updates over the last year on progress of this project. At the meeting of this Committee in September last year it was reported that the Council had appointed Jadu to provide the new website and a project start meeting had taken place. A project plan has been provided to the Council which sets out in detail what is required of both the Council and the supplier to ensure the new website is delivered in agreed timescales.
- 3 This report provides Members with an update on progress with the project as well as the work the Council has planned to improve the way in which it publishes the range of data required under the Local Government Transparency Code.

#### **Website Update**

- 4 The design phase of the website is now complete and has been signed off. There are two phases currently under way. The build phase, which is in

## Agenda Item 9

progress with Jadu. This is the technical phase of designing the structure of the new website. The other phase is content migration. Internally, officers are reviewing all of the information on the Council's current website, in order to create new content that fits with the customer focussed aims of the new website.

- 5 Overall project management is being provided by Jadu, with regular weekly calls between the Jadu project manager and the Corporate Customer Services & Delivery Manager. The project is running to plan and is on track to achieve all deadlines.
- 6 The Corporate Customer Services & Delivery Manager will provide a verbal update to the Advisory Committee at the meeting to bring Members up to date with the very latest progress on the project.

### Local Government Transparency Code

- 7 Under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 the Council is required by Regulations to publish 13 different sets of data and to make this data available free for re-use. The data sets required are currently published on the Council website at [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/transparency](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/transparency), and include expenditure exceeding £500, procurement information, local authority land and senior officer salaries. A full record of the data required to be published is available within the background papers highlighted at the end of this report.
- 8 Currently the Council publishes its data to the minimum required standard by publishing in an Excel document format and /or a PDF document format. Although this satisfies the requirements of the Regulations it is less helpful to customers and others that may wish to re-use the data, for reasons which may include developing applications to support residents to more clearly understand the Council's data.
- 9 To enable the Council to improve its overall approach to transparency and the provision of open data sets a plan is in place to develop a secondary website which will be designed deliberately to host data and information in a format that may not be possible within the existing plans for the new Council website.
- 10 Examples available elsewhere for Members information include:
  - Nottingham City Council - <http://www.opendatanottingham.org.uk/Default.aspx>
  - Greater London Authority - <http://data.london.gov.uk/>
  - Detroit - <http://data.detroitmi.gov/>
- 11 It is anticipated that the new data website will be developed during the summer of 2016.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

- 12 Costs associated with the website project are met from within existing budgets.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 13 A project risk register is in place for the delivery of the new council website which is reviewed on a regular basis.

### Equality Assessment

- 14 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**

- 15 It is apparent that customer expectations and behaviours are constantly changing. Through the progression of the work outlined in this report, we will ensure that developing technology is used in an effective manner to meet these changes. We also aim to encourage customers to use easier, more cost effective methods of accessing services, whilst not disadvantaging those without access to technology.

**Appendices**                      None

**Background Papers:**            Local Government Transparency Code 2015  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408386/150227\\_PUBLICATION\\_Final\\_LGTC\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408386/150227_PUBLICATION_Final_LGTC_2015.pdf)

**Jim Carrington-West**  
**Chief Officer Corporate Support**

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**Policy & Performance Advisory Committee Work Plan 2015/16 (as at 17/02/2016)**

1 March 2016	7 June 2016	22 September 2016	24 November 2016
Open Data and Transparency Council Projects - Update Draft Corporate Plan Update on website	Annual Complaints Report - 2015/16  Draft Corporate Plan		

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