

29 February 2024 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 21.02.24

This meeting will be livestreamed to YouTube [here](#):

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIT1f_F5OfvTzxjZk6Zqn6g



Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee

Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Bayley; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Thornton

Cllrs. Abraham, Clayton, G. Darrington, Hogarth, Malone, Manamperi, James Morgan, Varley, Waterton and White

Agenda

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

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. Minutes To agree minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 5 December 2023, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 6)	
2. Declarations of interest Any declarations not already registered.		
3. Actions form previous meeting (if any)		
4. Update from Portfolio Holder		
5. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
6. Digital Transformation and Customer Insights - 6 month update	(Pages 7 - 12)	Amy Wilton Tel: 01732 227280
7. Communications Strategy	(Pages 13 - 28)	Daniel Whitmarsh Tel: 01732 227414
8. Work plan	(Pages 29 - 30)	

EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

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

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

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Bayley (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Clayton, G. Darrington, Malone, James Morgan, Varley, Waterton and White

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Hogarth and Manamperi

Cllrs. Barnett, P. Darrington, and Robinson were also present.

20. Minutes

Members discussed the minutes of the previous meeting. Members discussed amending Minute 18 to better reflect the questions regarding clear deliverables and repetition within the Plan. The Chairman highlighted that the Portfolio Holder's responses to these issues were minuted, and that minutes were not verbatim. Members further noted that the Governance Committee would be reviewing the procedures surrounding recordings of meetings, which may make them more accessible. It was agreed that the minutes would not be amended, as the minutes of this meeting reference the discussion held.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 26 September 2023 be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21. Declarations of interest

There were none.

22. Actions form previous meeting

There were none.

23. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder and Leader gave an update on the services within their portfolio. The Economic Development Team and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project Officer were named Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Champion of the Year at the Institute of Economic Development Annual Awards. The award celebrated his work in helping the both the council and other organisations better support those with visual impairments, and have appropriate interventions in place when they join. These

Agenda Item 1 Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 5 December 2023

included having guide assistants, making adjustments to language used, and adapting systems such as finance, IT, and learning development.

The Stangrove Estate programme was progressing within budget, and was due to complete in March 2024. Two new car parking lots were already open for residents to use. This would help address local residents' concerns regarding the development's impact to on-street parking. 8 of the 13 homes built had been purchased by Quercus Housing and would be used for affordable housing. The remaining five would be marketed for private sale. The Portfolio Holder shared some pictures of the development.

Other developments that supported the Council Plan, Town Centre Strategies, the Economic Development Plan, and the emerging Local Plan were ongoing. Several of these proposals required recosting, to address inflation, and would be brought through the committee system when prepared.

The Council intended to hold a public consultation in February 2024 regarding the Council- and KCC-owned Land East of High Street, Sevenoaks. This would test public opinion on early concepts and gather suggestions from stakeholders and residents.

A report regarding a new business park would be brought to the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee in January 2024. Members of the committee were invited to attend.

The Council had been shortlisted for the UK Employer of the Year at the Investors in People Awards, and were the highest ranked public sector organisation. The Council did not win, but had received valuable feedback from the programme.

A trainer had been identified to provide Equalities Training for Members. This would be held on 10 January in the Council Chamber.

24. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

25. Budget 2024/25: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Head of Finance presented the report which set out updates to the 2024/25 budget process within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan.

Some changes had been made to future assumptions and they would be continued to be reviewed during the budget process. The key cost driver continued to be inflation, with pressure coming through on service demand, the pay award and the cost of goods and services. The items listed in Appendix E reported a current annual budget gap of £1.368m. Members were advised that they were likely to have to make more

difficult decisions during the 2024/25 budget setting process than they had had to make for many years.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions from Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council once again set a balanced 10-year budget and continued to aim to be financially self-sufficient with no direct funding from Government through additional Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the budget retroactively incorporated external funding, but did not assume its existence for the purposes of balancing the budget. Balancing the budget over 10 years allowed for greater flexibility in addressing large surprise costs.

The report presented a growth item that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from the Advisory Committee, before finalising the budget for 2024/25.

The Committee considered the savings proposals as set out in Appendices G and H, which were for a reduction in the contact hours of the Customer Solutions service, and for a new Commercial Property fees and charges schedule. Members asked questions regarding the proposals, and were advised that the increases in fees and charges were on a cost-recovery basis, as they related to statutory services. Members supported both proposals.

Members gave further consideration to additional suggestions for growth and savings which had been suggested by Members. Those suggestions relevant to this Advisory Committee were as follows:

- Drop the IIP Accreditation
- Land Charges Service Review
- Improvements to the Procurement Strategy
- Investigate over-delivery on certain Performance Indicators

Following debate, Members agreed that only the second and third suggestions should be referred to Cabinet for further consideration. It was noted that the third suggestion was being investigated outside of the budget process through the Audit Committee.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The savings proposals (SCIA 13, SCIA 14) identified in Appendices G&H to the report applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and that
- b) Cabinet consider the following suggestion:

Agenda Item 1

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 5 December 2023

- Land Charges Service Review
- Improvements to the Procurement Strategy

26. Rural England Prosperity Fund Update

The Economic Development Officer - Business Support & Town Centres presented the report, which updated the committee on the monitoring of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund. Both programmes were subject to extensive government-led monitoring, and all reports submitted by the Council had been approved with no concerns. The programme covered 15 project areas, and aimed to maximise the Economic Development Strategy work alongside it. Some projects were delivered in partnership with neighbouring authorities; members were advised that, where this was the case, all funding put forward by Sevenoaks was distributed to recipients within the district. Members heard a brief overview of the grant programmes which had been delivered.

In response to questions, members were advised that every area in the district had been allocated funding. All of the available funding had been allocated through the investment plan, as agreed by Members. The Committee viewed a [video](#) produced by the council to raise awareness of Small Business Saturday, as part of the Town Centre Programme. Members discussed the programme, and requested that further data regarding impressions and responses to the video and similar projects be included in future updates.

Members discussed the forecast projects. They were advised that these were town council projects which would be confirmed when brought forward to the Council. Funding had been allocated for them through the Town Centre funding, but their specifics had yet to be agreed. The programme extended for 3 years; judgements regarding its continuation beyond that could not be made.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

27. Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Officer - Business Support & Town Centres presented the report, which updated the committee on the first year of the Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy had no additional funding associated with it, and thus partnership working and available funding were maximised. The UKSPF investment plan was aligned with the EDS, which has meant the funding could deliver projects covering both areas.

The Strategy was a framework centred on supporting the local economy. This approach kept a level of flexibility within the Strategy, which would allow it to adapt to external circumstances and opportunities. 86% of actions were either Green- or Amber- coded, which meant progress had been made towards the objective. The 5% of actions which were Red-coloured were being actively worked on, to bring them to amber before the completion of the strategy.

Members asked questions regarding broadband coverage within the district and its impact on professional services. The officer explained that the council were engaging with Kent County Council regarding the Broadband Delivery Plan, to add value within the district. It was noted that smaller businesses had taken advantage of the Meeting Point hub and similar businesses, which could guarantee strong internet connections. Community-led solutions for broadband in rural areas were also a possible avenue to address this.

Members asked questions of clarification regarding specific projects. The redevelopment of 96 High Street, Sevenoaks had been linked to the Land east of High Street, Sevenoaks, and would be included within the proposed consultation in February 2024. Several ideas were being investigated, but stakeholder engagement was necessary before further developing them.

Members discussed the report, and raised some areas of potential further investigation, including the re-establishing the Otford Road Park and Ride and the impact of sustained roadworks on local businesses.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

28. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted with the following additions:

29 February 2024

- Digital Transformation & Customer Insights – Six Month Update
- Communications Strategy

18 June 2024

- Land East of High Street, Sevenoaks – Consultation Results
- Performance Indicator Reviews
- Annual Complaints Report

Members discussed possible additions to the work plan, including a review of the suggestion that committee meetings be held in the day, and an update on Bevan Place. Officers would investigate the first option, and an update on Bevan Place would be included in the Portfolio Holder's update at the meeting in February.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.20 pm

CHAIRMAN

Agenda Item 1
Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 5 December 2023

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMER INSIGHTS UPDATE

Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee – 29 February 2024

Report of: Jim Carrington-West, Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report provides Members with an update on the work of the Council's Customer Insights team and the effectiveness of the digital services that have been implemented.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officer: Amy Wilton, Ext. 7280

Recommendation to Innovation and Advisory Committee:

That the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation: To update Members on the progress with delivering digital services in response to high demand for services and the need to prioritise resources to those customers most in need of face-to-face support.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council has seen a sustained increase in customer contact across all services, in recent years. Demand for services has increased by an average of 24% since 2019, with individual services experiencing increased workloads of up to 60% over the same period as the pressures of the cost of living have impacted individuals and households.
- 2 As public spending has been squeezed and savings have been required in the Council's budgets the size of the workforce to manage the increased demand has remained largely unchanged, and has reduced in some areas.
- 3 It has been essential for the Council to continually review its service delivery in order to maintain a high level of service to our customers.
- 4 Providing a greater range of digital services has been one solution that is beginning to prove highly effective in supporting services to deliver for their customers. The Council's focus is designing digital services to enable those customers that are able to interact with services in the way that best suits them and when convenient. In turn, this allows Officers to provide telephone

Agenda Item 6

and face-to-face support to those that cannot interact digitally or are most in need and require in-person advice and support.

Customer Solutions

- 5 The first point of contact for the majority of customer contact with the Council is through the Customer Solutions team. The team answer customer enquiries predominantly over the telephone, by email and face-to-face at the Council offices. The table below shows the average annual contact volumes for the Customer Solutions team.
- 6 Since 2019 the overall demand on the Customer Solutions service has grown from 97,628 interactions to 130,050 at the end of March 2023. An increase of 33.2% in demand for service. Current figures show these are beginning to reduce, with average levels of demand shown in the table below for 2023/24.

Average phone calls p.a.	100,000
Average emails p.a.	10,500
Approximate Reception visits p.a.	10,500
Total	121,000

- 7 To serve our customers more effectively, more efficiently and through better use of data, IT and other technology we have been able to create more capacity to enable us to meet current and future challenges.

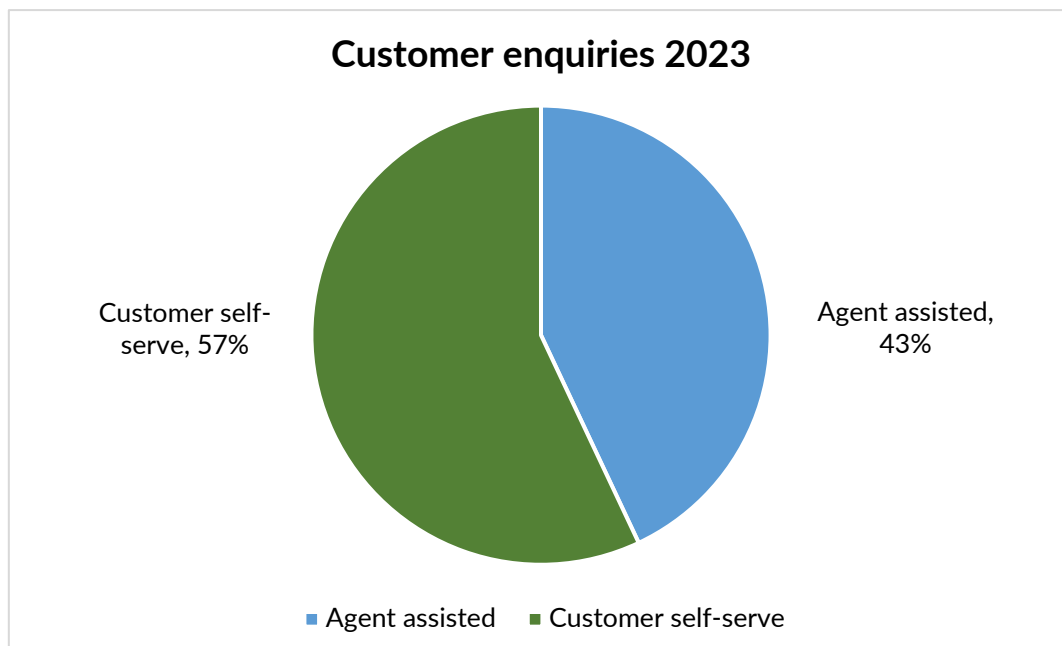
Customer Insights

- 8 The Customer Insights team was formed in 2022. The team brings together a range of skills such as digital development, customer data analysis and customer engagement and user testing to develop new digital services.
- 9 The team is integral to Sevenoaks District Council achieving its Digital Strategy, with a focus on enabling quick and easy access to services that are convenient to customers.
- 10 This in turn provides greater resilience within front line teams to be available in person, to serve customers who are unable to interact digitally or who require in person support to meet their needs.
- 11 The Customer Insights team works to an Agile projects methodology to achieve its aims of:
 - Reducing the levels of avoidable contact from customers;
 - Increasing the capability of officers to resolve a greater proportion of all customer contact at the first point of contact;

- Increasing the number of customers using self-service options, through improved digital technology; and
- Sustaining or improving levels of customer satisfaction.

Developing digital services

- 12 To improve access to services for customers, enable 24/7 self-service and provide greater efficiencies to the Council, the Customer Solutions and Customer Insights team have worked together to identify the high contact areas from customers over the telephone and by email.
- 13 The results of this work has informed and shaped a work plan for the Customer Insights team, providing a focus for projects and identifying the services with the greatest priority.
- 14 During 2023 the Customer Insights team created 42 digital forms, for use both internally to assist Officers in their work, and also made available on the Council website to enable customers to access council services online. These included (amongst others) large item collections, missed refuse collections, fly tipping, garden waste permits, and MOT bookings.
- 15 In total, approximately 22,400 customers completed their transaction with the Council online, using self-service, during 2023.
- 16 The following chart demonstrates the split between customer online self-service activity and customer enquiries answered on the telephone by a member of staff.



- 17 Future work will continue to be focused on services with the greatest demand and that will improve efficiency. Decisions will continue to be data led with a customer centred focus at all times.

Agenda Item 6

Customer Satisfaction

- 18 An important focus for the delivery of all services is to ensure that a consistently high level of customer satisfaction is achieved.
- 19 During 2023 an automated survey was introduced on telephone lines, which enables customers the choice to take part in a very short survey to measure their satisfaction at the end of each call. In 2023 customer satisfaction was recorded at 86%.
- 20 Further work is being undertaken to explore a quick and easy way for customers to give their feedback when using online services.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The progress in delivering digital and online services is supporting the Council to manage its current budget position and over-time is likely to deliver cashable savings that can prevent budget growth or be re-invested in services.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this report. The Council continues to ensure that customers are able to access services face-to-face, by phone, email or online as suits their needs and their circumstances.

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.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

Through the work of the Customer Insights team the Council is able to maintain its focus on the customer whilst achieving efficiencies in services, enabling greater levels of productivity, have a positive impact on the budget and deliver high quality in service delivery.

Digital services support a more effective working environment for staff and give our customers choice in how they interact with the Council. Our data shows that many

customers are choosing the flexibility that online services provide, which allows Officer to dedicate more of their time those customers that need to contact us in-person. This is creating additional capacity without the necessity on every occasion to grow the size of the workforce.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

Jim Carrington-West

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Customer & Resources

This page is intentionally left blank

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2024 - 27

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee – 29 February 2024

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For consideration

Also considered by:

- Cabinet – 14 March 2024

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report sets out the Council's approach to communication activities by proposing a Strategy and clear principles to guide engagement with our audiences.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Promoting the five Council Plan themes of Communities, Economy, Environment, Housing and Our Council.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officers: Lee Banks, Ext. 7161 and Daniel Whitmarsh, Ext. 7414

Recommendations to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:

- (a) Members comments on the Communications Strategy are noted; and
- (b) Cabinet are recommended to approve the Communications Strategy 2024 to 2027.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

The Communications Strategy 2024 to 2027 is approved.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that Members are able to discuss and inform the Council's approach to communicating with its communities through the Communications Strategy.

Introduction and background

- 1 This report sets out the Council's approach to its communication activities. It proposes a strategic approach and clear principles to guide engagement with our communities, staff, Members and the media to promote our services and achievements, to build trust with our communities and safeguard the Council's reputation.

Agenda Item 7

Communications priorities

- 2 The overarching priorities of our Communications Strategy (Appendix 1) is to provide consistently excellent, innovative, value for money and effective communications...

“to increase awareness of the Council’s services and its achievements, build trust and improve the reputation of the Council.”
- 3 The Communication Strategy is based on six overarching principles to support the delivery of the Council’s priorities. These are to:
 - i. Promote and uphold the Council’s reputation as a trusted, effective, efficient, innovative organisation that is focused on the public and their needs.
 - ii. Ensure that all communication and engagement activities are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels to maximise resources, ensure value for money and give maximum support to the Council’s strategic priorities.
 - iii. Promote the Sevenoaks District as a great place for doing business, to live, work and visit.
 - iv. Increase opportunities for people to engage with us on issues and services that affect them by developing existing and new channels of communication.
 - v. Coordinate internal communications with:
 - a. Staff – to ensure they feel valued and are engaged on the priorities, activities and messages of the Council, to inspire them to deliver the Council’s objectives
 - b. Elected Members – to support them in their role as community leaders, by providing communication skills and up-to-date information.
 - vi. Ensure our digital communications develop in line with advancing technology, social changes and customer needs, to allow us to engage with our communities in an effective and efficient way.
- 4 The Communication Strategy is supported by an annual communications action plan (which is approved by the Portfolio Holder for Communications), ‘publicity and media relations guidelines’ and the ‘paid-for advertising policy’.

Delivering the Communications Strategy

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

- 6 The Communications Team consists of two full time members of staff - the Communications Manager and the Communications Officer. The Team is managed and supported by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 7 The Communications Team's responsibilities include:
 - Managing and upholding the Council's Brand Guide
 - Devising and running external and internal campaigns (using the OASIS methodology) to support the work of the Council
 - Media relations (issuing news releases, fielding media enquiries and organising media briefings)
 - Producing In Shape and helping colleagues with publications, posters and other collateral
 - Updating and managing the Council's main website. Advising teams about adding accessible content and documents to Council websites
 - Running corporate surveys and supporting colleagues with their survey needs
 - Managing the Council's core social media accounts (Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram – currently 18,000 followers across all four platforms). Producing short social media videos
 - Email marketing and newsletters
 - Developing and managing the Council's intranet
 - Producing 'grapeVine', a monthly staff newsletter
 - Placing the Council's public notice adverts.

Residents' views on Council communications

- 10 The most recent Residents' Survey (September 2021) asked residents where they heard about the work of the Council, satisfaction with In Shape magazine and satisfaction with the Council as a whole.
- 11 The data tables on the following page set out residents views for Members' information to provide context to the Strategy that is proposed.

Agenda Item 7

Sources of information where residents find out about what the Council is doing:	
In Shape - the Council's magazine	68%
Speaking with friends, neighbours and relations	43%
Council website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk	32%
Speaking with Council staff by telephone	22%
Local newspapers	18%
Printed information / leaflets	16%
The Council's social media feeds	5%
Councillors	5%
Speaking with Council staff face-to-face	4%
Radio	3%
Public meetings	2%
Other	5%
Don't know	2%
None of these	8%

Time spent reading In Shape	
Up to 10 minutes	56%
More than 10 minutes	30%
Don't read it	15%

Views on In Shape	% satisfied
Easy to read	94%
Informs me of Council news / activities I have not previously heard about	88%
Is colourful and well produced	88%
Tells me about the Council's future plans	90%
It keeps me informed about the Council's work and local services	90%

Overall satisfaction	% satisfied
Satisfaction with the way the Council keeps residents informed	82%
Trust in the Council	86%
Satisfaction with the way in which the Council runs things	81%

Conclusions

The Communications Strategy has been drafted for collaboration and input from Members of the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee and then Cabinet.

Providing the draft Strategy ensures that Members input can be incorporated fully in the approach they wish the Council to take to its communication with residents, local businesses and other stakeholders.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this report.

Equality Assessment

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

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the Council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the District, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Appendices

Appendix A – Communications Strategy 2024 to 2027

Dr Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank



Communications Strategy 2024 to 2027

Contents

Communication Strategy & Priorities.....	4
Delivering our strategy.....	5
How we communicate.....	6
Brand Guidelines.....	7
Accessibility	7
Monitoring and evaluating.....	8
Appendix 1 - Our Council narrative	9

Communications Strategy

Our communications strategy sets out how we will communicate to:

- Help the Council achieve its objectives
- Engage effectively with audiences
- Demonstrate the work we do for our communities
- Ensure people understand what we do, and
- Work to change behaviour and perceptions where necessary.

Communication Strategy & Priorities

By providing consistently excellent, innovative, value for money and effective communications our strategy is:

“to increase awareness of the Council’s services and its achievements, build trust and improve the reputation of the Council.”

Our priorities:

1. Promote and uphold the Council’s reputation as a trusted, effective, efficient, innovative organisation that is focused on the public and their needs.
2. Ensure that all communication and engagement activities are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels to maximise the effective use of resources, ensure value for money and give maximum support to the Council’s strategic priorities.
3. Promote the Sevenoaks District as a great place for doing business, to live, work and visit.
4. Increase opportunities for people to engage with the Council on issues and services that affect them by developing existing and new channels of communication.
5. Coordinate internal communications with:
 - Staff – to ensure they feel valued and are engaged on the priorities, activities and messages of the Council, to inspire them to deliver the Council’s objectives.
 - Elected Members – to support them in their role as community leaders, by providing Members with communication skills and up to date information.
6. Ensure our digital communications develop in line with advancing technology, social changes and customer needs, to allow us to engage with our communities in an effective and efficient way.

Delivering our strategy

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

The overall responsibility for the successful implementation must rest with every member of staff and Elected Members, as they are our ambassadors and play a crucial role in delivering information to our communities in accordance with the Council's narrative.

Our approach to delivering effective communications will:

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

The Annual Communications Action Plan will be agreed with the Council's Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Communications.

How we communicate

We use a number of communication channels including:

Externally

- In Shape - our quarterly magazine for residents and businesses
- The Council website
- Local, regional, national and trade/industry media
- Our Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts
- Marketing materials
- Public notices
- Advertising – social media, newspapers, magazines, out of home and radio
- Signage and posters
- Events, roadshows and displays
- Door drops
- Reports and policy documents
- Council meetings and minutes
- Email marketing
- Vehicle livery
- Environments (internal and external)
- Via partner organisations channels and sites.

Internally

- Intranet
- grapeVine monthly email newsletter
- Emails
- Staff briefings
- Senior management meetings and Council staff meetings
- Members' updates

Brand Guidelines

Poor branding distances our services, confuses customers and can undermine trust in the Council and affect its reputation.

We aim to ensure that all Council communications are in accordance with the Brand Guidelines.

We aim to always present a strong brand identity, on all communication materials and channels, to clearly and consistently identify the organisation and its key messages to stakeholders.

We will do this by ensuring all parts of the organisation are aware of the brand guidelines and have processes in place to ensure that all materials are designed and written to the agreed brand identity.

Accessibility

We are committed to making our communications accessible to everyone within our communities.

Our Brand Guidelines provide guidance on the use of plain English to help us communicate simply and clearly. This is especially important for people who are neurodivergent and people with learning disabilities or mental impairments, such as dementia.

We will produce our publications in large print on request for people with visual impairments.

We utilise a telephone interpretation service to allow us to communicate with people whose first language is not English.

We follow best practice for accessible digital communications, including our website content and checking documents for accessibility.

Monitoring and evaluating

To ensure that we are achieving our communication priorities, we will monitor and evaluate them through various methods, including:

- Campaign evaluation (using the OASIS methodology)
- Social media metrics
- Residents' surveys
- Members survey on communication
- Staff survey on communication
- Service satisfaction surveys with customers

Appendix 1 – Our Council narrative

Our narrative and key messages, support the Council's ambitions and objectives as set out in **Delivering together, our Council Plan**.

The narrative below is a sample of the top-line messages that can be used for each objective and activity. Further messages will be developed within individual campaign plans.

These ambitions, objectives and narrative are further supported by our Council Brand.

We know Sevenoaks District Council is a great place to work. We're ambitious. We strive for better. We're not satisfied with the status quo, happy to maintain the mediocre and do things the way they've always been done.

Our aim is to provide **excellent services, great value for money and to continually innovate** so we can find even better ways of getting things done.

Unlike other councils, we make sure the **wellbeing** of the community runs through everything we do. Our five priorities set out our focus areas. Each priority has a series of promises to improve the things that are most important to the people we serve. Our priorities are:

- Our Communities
- The Economy
- The Environment
- Housing
- Our Council

Within our diverse organisation, there is one thing we all have in common – our customer focus. Without the people we serve, we wouldn't be here. It's our job to serve those individuals and businesses as best we can, because they help to make the District the great place it is today.

We want everyone who comes into contact with us to have the same, consistently great experience. To do that we need to ensure we're pulling together in the same direction.

Our jobs and services may differ, but we all have the same vision to make the Sevenoaks District a great place to live and work for everyone.

That means empowering our staff to do the best job they possibly can. Just as our community is made up of many individuals, so too is the Council.

It's the individual members of staff who make things happen and we want to do whatever we can to empower our teams to make decisions, solve problems, innovate and improve services.

With this in mind, we can each step up and fulfil our promises to serve those living and working in the Sevenoaks District.

If you have any questions about our Communications Strategy, please email communications@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Updated 9 February 2024

01732 227000

This publication is available in large print or can be explained in other languages by calling 01732 227000.

**Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee Work Plan
2023/24**

29 February 2024

Communications Strategy

Digital Transformation and Customer Insights - 6 Month update

This page is intentionally left blank