

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	15 th March 2017

Jan 2017



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	Agenda item No.
Communications Strategy 2017-18	Leader	Joanne Platt – Interim Corporate Improvement Manager	4

Is this report a KEY DECISION (i.e. more than £75,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	No
Is this report on the Cabinet Forward Plan ?	Yes
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	No

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval of a new Communications' Strategy for the Council for 2017-18.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1: Cabinet is asked to approve the Communications Strategy attached at **Appendix 1**

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The report relates to the following corporate priorities

Clean, green and safe	✓	Strong and healthy communities	✓
Strong South Ribble in the heart of prosperous Lancashire	✓	Efficient, effective and exceptional council	✓

4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

4.1 The development of a Communications Strategy is a key action in the Council's Improvement Plan, and has a target date of mid-March for consultation with Scrutiny Committee and subsequent Cabinet approval.

4.2 The strategy provides the framework for the way the Council communicates with staff, elected members, partners, residents, businesses, developers, investors and other stakeholders.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Communications Strategy submitted for approval (**Appendix 1**) has been developed by a Group of Core Managers and staff working alongside a Communications consultant commissioned by the Local Government Association and the Council's own Communications Team. The Scrutiny Committee's Review of external communications undertaken in 2012 has also been considered in developing this strategy
- 5.2 The action plan developed to underpin the strategy sets out the actions to be delivered in the short term (within the next month), the medium term (within 3-months) and the longer term (6 - 12-months) actions. Many of the short-term actions are already underway.
- 5.3 Delivery of the action plan is challenging, but as improving communications is a priority for the Council, existing activities will be re-prioritised, particularly within the Communications Team. For example, continuing with the production of the Council's half-yearly publication (Forward) will impact on the ability to deliver other actions in the plan and Cabinet is asked to decide if this should continue.
- 5.4 A residents' survey has recently been undertaken which included questions in relation to how residents currently receive information about the Council and its services, how they prefer to receive information and how they prefer to contact the Council. At the time of writing this report, the results of this survey were awaited.
- 5.5 Poor internal communication was an issue identified in last year's staff survey and accordingly, actions to address this have been prioritised within the strategy and the strategy will sit alongside an Organisational Development Strategy currently being developed.
- 5.6 Progress towards meeting the targets contained in the Communications' Strategy will be monitored by the Council's Senior Management Team and reported to members at half-yearly intervals. The Strategy and the action plan will be reviewed in 12-months' time to ensure that it continues to reflect Council priorities.
- 5.7 It is essential that the strategy is owned and championed by all members and staff in the Council and that behaviours that do not reflect the principles of the strategy are challenged in a timely and appropriate way.
- 5.8 The Strategy was considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14th March.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None – the Council needs to take a strategic approach to the way it manages communications if it is to maintain effective communications with residents, business, partners and other stakeholders and with staff.

7. WIDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report and it is anticipated that activities will be contained within existing budgets.

7.2 Comments of the Monitoring Officer

There are no concerns from a legal perspective with the proposed Communications Strategy. The advantages of having such a robust strategy are self-evident.

<p>Other implications:</p> <p>Risk:</p>	<p>The Council needs to ensure that it communicates effectively with staff, elected members, partners, residents, businesses, developers, investors and other stakeholders to maintain a good reputation, demonstrate transparency and to keep people informed about the services it provides and how they can be accessed.</p> <p>Good communication also contributes towards improving staff morale and maintaining a happy and motivated workforce, as well as being an effective tool in attracting investment in the Borough.</p> <p>The Communications Strategy is fundamental to achieving this and is one of the controls to mitigate a number of key risks in the Corporate Risk Register.</p>
<p>HR Implications</p>	<p>One of the key purposes of the Communications Strategy is to address concerns raised by staff in the recent staff survey. The strategy will contribute towards improving staff morale and maintaining a happy and motivated workforce</p>

8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Council Improvement Plan
Appendix 1: Communications Strategy