

<b>REPORT TO</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>
Scrutiny Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2017

Report template revised June 2008



<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
Communications Strategy 2017-18	Leader	Joanne Platt	

## 1. SUMMARY

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.

The Strategy attached at **Appendix 1** has been developed by a Group of Core Managers and staff working alongside a Communications consultant provided by the Local Government Association and the Council’s own Communications Team.

## 2. LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Communication Strategy provides the framework by which the Council will communicate with staff, elected members, partners, residents, businesses, developers, investors and other stakeholders in pursuit of Council priorities.

## 3. DETAILS AND REASONING

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The Strategy will be submitted to Cabinet for approval on 15th March 2017.

#### 4. Recommendations

Scrutiny Committee's comments on the draft Communications Strategy are sought prior to its submission to Cabinet for formal approval on 15th March.

#### 5. WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>	There are no direct budgetary implications that are not contained within existing budgets as a result of this report. Any financial implications arising when the Strategy is delivered will be subject to a further report.
<b>LEGAL</b>	None
<b>RISK</b>	<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>
<b>IMPACT ON EQUALITY</b>	None

<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	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.
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<b>OTHER (see below)</b>	
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<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Council Improvement Plan  
**Appendix 1:** Communications Strategy