Inverclyde council

Report To:	**Policy & Resources Committee**	**Date:**	**31 January 2023**
Report By:	**Head of Organisational Development, Policy and Communications**	**Report No:**	**PR/03/23/SM**
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Subject:	**Communications and Engagement Strategy**		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   ☒For Decision   ☐For Information/Noting

1.2   The purpose of this report is to propose a communications and engagement strategy for Inverclyde Council setting out strategic principles behind council-wide communications and engagement to provide a new 'one council, one voice' approach.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   It is recommended that the committee review and agree the contents of the communications and engagement strategy and action plan.

Steven McNab
Head of Organisational Development,
Policy & Communcation

4.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

4.1 The Council's most recent communications strategy set out some of the broad mechanics of how communications is delivered centrally across the council.

4.2 For any organisation, but particularly public services, communications and engagement are key tools in ensuring that residents, customers and clients can access services and information about those services when they need to.

4.3 The Council has a vast range of audiences to engage with and a new communications strategy aims to provide greater co-ordination, consistency and clarity in making sure that residents, customers and clients can access services.

4.4 In addition, ensuring council employees are fully engaged in the work of the Council aids both internal and external audiences as, which many local authorities, the majority of employees are also residents.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 Appendix 1 presents a new communications and engagement strategy for the council setting out a range of communications standards and processes to aid improving the co-ordination of communications and engagement across the Council, and to ensure support is given to the HSCP in a planned and co-ordinated way.

5.2 Appendix 2 includes an action plan to be associated with the communications and engagement strategy to support the Council and HSCP moving towards the ambitions set out in the strategy. The action plan will be regularly reviewed by the Corporate Management Team to ensure progress.

5.3 Appendix 3 highlights the crisis communications cascade which provides the Council with a consistent approach to ensure a range of audiences are communicated with.

5.4 In the short term the strategy seeks to consolidate communications and engagement activity across the Council and HSCP to focus on the main mechanisms and longer term to put in place a new 'one council, one voice' approach to ensure consistency and clarity.

5.5 The strategy also seeks to embed new communications standards, put in place procedures to co-ordinate a range of activity including project communication plans and co-ordination and oversight of consultations and surveys.

5.6 One immediate action is to start the process for the closing of the current intranet, ICON, which is no longer supported by the Council's provider and is not considered fit for purpose. The strategy and associated action plan proposes the transfer over year one of the content to the website or another online resource if identified as being a better location (for example as the roll out of Microsoft 365 is more widespread practical areas such as people finder, room bookings may be best built within this environment).

5.7 The aim would be to remove all content from ICON, the council intranet, reviewing content at the same time to make it more accessible to a wider audience of employees and to build new direct communication mechanisms, potentially off the Council network direct to council employees learning lessons from the system failure during the recent power outage.

5.8 A survey of Council employees identified some data on the current use of ICON, the Council intranet, which will inform the prioritisation of content to be retained, updated and moved. The main areas of content employees said they used ICON, the council intranet to access, are:
- HR
- People finder
- News
- Internal vacancies
- Courses/ e-learning
- Policies
- Payroll
- Training

5.9 When asked about the Council website, three quarters of employees said that they mostly access the site for work purposes with the remaining 25% doing so for personal reasons. The main areas of the website accessed by Council employees are:
- Schools/school holidays
- Committee reports/meetings
- Vacancies
- Bin collection information
- General information

5.10 The development of a range of actions as part of this communications and engagement strategy (appendix 2) seek to ensure better planning of communications and engagement activity including objective setting and measurement of success for individual activity.

5.11 The communications and engagement strategy and associated action plan seeks to put in place new arrangements or strengthen existing ones to support both individual service communications activity and the overarching corporate plan.

5.12 While measurement of success for the strategy and action plan will be on the delivery of actions, the overall aim is to increase engagement and communications activity and that each campaign, project and system change will have its owns measurements such as wider recognition of the Council brand, increase audience, more traffic on mechanisms (eg website and social media). The strategy and action plans aims to put in place the underlying guidance and mechanisms to support that activity.

5.13 Creation of a new communications plan template, for example, aims to improve communication planning and consistency and would build in clear objective setting and measurement of success for all future communications activity across the council.

5.14 While the audience for the communications strategy itself is chiefly internal services and partner organisations, the implications of delivering the individual actions is to ensure that council communications activity actively identifies, examines and targets communications to its key stakeholders.

5.15 This includes embedding protected characteristics under the Equality Act into communications planning to ensure services actively address any particular communications needs.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial	X		
Legal/Risk	X		
Human Resources	X		
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)	X		
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty	X		
Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing			X
Environmental & Sustainability			X
Data Protection			X

6.2 **Finance**

Not at this time.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

6.3 **Legal/Risk**

The strategy highlights some of the areas where the Council has a legal duty when delivering communications and engagement activity and commits services to be mindful of legislation when developing activity.

6.4 **Human Resources**

The strategy includes updates on internal communications activity and mechanisms and proposes the removal of the Council's current intranet.

6.5 **Strategic**

The strategy and action plan aims to provide a framework and activity to provide greater strategic oversight and co-ordination of communications and engagement activity and aligns to the ambitions of the Council and the Inverclyde Alliance to promote Inverclyde as a place for business, visitors and potential future residents to support repopulation.

6.6 **Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty**

The strategy includes data on how the Council seeks to protect areas such as protected characteristics and Gaelic language as part of its core communications activity.

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

X	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required and will be made available on the Council website: https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2023
	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

6.7 **Children and Young People**

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

6.8 **Environmental/Sustainability**

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
X	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

6.9 **Data Protection**

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The range of services included in this paper have been engaged with in the preparation of the strategy and action plan including human resources, IT, customer services, legal services, civil contingencies, policy and HSCP. Further engagement will take place in development of the individual elements contained within the draft action plan with services and external partners.

In addition the council carries out regular employee surveys assessing a range of areas including effective communications by services, the most being in 2022.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Policy and Resources Committee, 21 March 2017, Agenda Item 14, Communications Strategy (Report No: PR/08/17/WB/GB): https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/1950

One council, one voice

Inverclyde Council - Communications and Engagement Strategy

Introduction

Inverclyde Council is more than the sum of their parts.

It is a collection of public service areas united by a commitment to deliver for the community it services.

Through its collective action it can help to improve the lives of each and every citizen in the community and improve the chances of growth and development of each and every community.

Communications is at the heart of its activity.

Good communication can help to inspire and engage communities while poor communications can alienate and disenfranchise.

Too often from many public services the messaging can be disparate and fragmented, the language and communications approaches can be confusing and difficult to access.

The aim of this communications and engagement strategy is to create a single 'one council, one voice' approach.

It provides the Council with a series of approaches and tactics to make sure that communications and engagement activity is planned, managed, clear, puts people at its heart and sticks to our agreed communication standards.

The 'once council, one voice' approach enables our residents, customers and clients to be as fully informed as they can be to access our essential services when they need them at any stage of life and as involved as they choose to be in how public services are run in their name and in their community.

Our communications standards

As an organisation collectively and as individuals, we communicate in a range of ways with thousands of people each and every week.

As part of this communications and engagement strategy we set out our communications standards. Some are general in their nature others are specific.

Some focus on areas where communication requires to be strengthened such as increasing the use of Gaelic across some activity, others consolidate existing areas of good practice such as media relations.

The aim is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to communications and engagement through clear planning and management.

Whatever the method, we will make sure that all of our communication is:

- Clear and easy to understand
- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Approachable
- Consistent in its frequency and style
- Honest
- Reliable and up to date

Clear and easy to understand

Clear language and plain English are the watchwords for all communications to ensure it is clear and easy to understand. Our language shouldn't be a barrier to communications, but it should be an aid to ensuring that residents can access our services and fully understand what we do and why.

One plan

The Council is a large and complex organisation, the single largest employer in the area and delivers a range of public services touching the lives of every citizen and community.

Its service planning can appear complex and bureaucratic to those from outside and unused to it.

Making access to services easy to understand and highlighting the need for council services to be seen to be part of the Council provides clarity for residents.

Partners

The Council engages with a vast range of partner organisations, agencies and contractors engaged on behalf of the Council to carry out work. An operational update to the Council's media and social media protocol will be put in place to confirm that the stipulations of the national guidance applies and that communications activity delivered on behalf of the council requires to be co-ordinated and planned.

Inclusive

We aim to ensure that our activity is inclusive and welcomes engagement and dialogue with people from all parts of the community.

Protected characteristics

We commit to ensuring that our communications and engagement activity takes account of protected characteristics as defined by The Equality Act 2010 including age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation.

To do this our draft communications plan template to be developed as part of this plan to support services to plan communications activity will include prompts on each of the characteristics listed in the Act.

In addition, the 'sign off' process for communications plans by the Council's corporate communications service will provide an opportunity to check activity against these characteristics.

Gaelic language

We will support the promotion of Gaelic language through our communications activity.

That will include the use of a Gaelic version of the council logo incorporated into the brand identity and the use of Gaelic language on appropriate documents, social media content.

Accessible

The Council aims to ensure that information about services and how they operate is heard by residents at a time when they need it.

As a principle the Council will adopt where practical a 'publish first' principle to information and data to encourage greater openness and accountability to ensure the council is in control of its information and to support the principles of freedom of information.

This principle could, for example, include the publication of regularly asked freedom of information data or publishing responses asked.

An examination will take place to identify proportionate opportunities to do that against best practice in the sector.

ICON, the council intranet, and the website

The Council intranet, ICON, is no longer fit for purpose or supported by the council's provider in its current format.

Work has been ongoing among services, principally human resources, to put content onto the Council website. The aim of this is to test the principle of information previously considered to be 'internal' onto an external location.

The short-term benefit if this approach is to ensure that content is available to a wider pool of employees including those who do not have direct access to a computer or email through the Council network.

It also reduces the need to continue to have a dedicated intranet as a mechanism for communications.

Over the course of the first year of this plan, services will be encouraged to move content onto the Council website or another identified location easily accessible by employees.

This would work towards the closure of ICON, the Council intranet but, with the loss of a mechanism, work would be carried out to ensure direct mechanisms were in place to cascade information to council employees direct in a planned way as part of the cascade of communications identified in this strategy particularly taking account of the need for offline mechanisms in the event of a power outage.

In addition, work would be carried out to examine future options for the existing Council website on a long-term replacement or a complimentary or replacement digital communications mechanism.

Social media

The Council's existing media and social media protocol sets out the procedures for council publicity to ensure the council complies with the guidance set out in the national guidance and local protocol.

As part of this strategy work will be developed to review all Council social media accounts to ensure content is focussed on the main social media accounts, that niche accounts are aligned to the overarching social media protocol and that social media sites with small audiences or rarely used are unpublished aligning with the Council's existing digital strategy.

Approachable

Building a strong customer service and public service ethos approach to communications and engagement ensures the Council and its services are approachable.

As part of the communications and engagement strategy we will focus on ensuring that communications and customer service is built into how the Council does business.

Recognising the needs of our residents as customers helps to ensure we are approachable as an organisation and that our manner towards individuals reflects on the Council and our area through our professional, compassionate and caring approach.

Customer service

We will dedicate time to reviewing all existing communications and customer service training modules available to Council employees and managers to ensure they reflect the 'one council, one voice' principles set out in this strategy.

We may develop bespoke training and guidance to further build customer service into the heart of how Council services are delivered encourage sector professionalism coupled with compassion and caring.

Consistent in its frequency and style

Any communications and engagement activity from a single organisation is seen, by our community as being from that organisation no matter the structure behind it.

To ensure a clear consistency the 'one council, one voice' approach aims to ensure that the language, style and content of communications and engagement activity is consistent and clear.

Consultations

Some consultations carried out by the council are small ad hoc surveys of service users, others are large scale such as the budget consultation and others are defined by legislation.

Because of the size of the organisation it is impossible to completely avoid date clashes of consultation and engagement activity, but new guidance and procedures will be created to support services in the co-ordination of consultation and to provide oversight.

In addition, work will be carried on reviewing options using existing mechanisms or developing bespoke ones to provide a consistent and co-ordinated online platform for digital surveys, questionnaires and consultations.

Communications planning

To support services a new template will be developed to create communications plans for Council activity and projects to focus on consistent use of the communication standards and to encourage examination of the impact on activity and the need for dedicated communications activity to people with protected characteristics.

This would be reviewed and agreed by the Council's communications team to ensure consistency and to ensure the Council's purchasing of external publicity, advertising, communications or marketing activity is carried out in a consistent way through the Council's communications team confirming the current practice where all advertising and communications spending is carried out through the team.

The team would continue to provide central co-ordination of communications, marketing, advertising, including promotional and statutory, and publicity across the Council supporting services to ensure that communication and engagement is built into project planning.

Corporate identity

The Council has, over the years, built a myriad of various sub brands which provide an inconsistent and fragmented picture of the council and its services.

A review of the Council, HSCP and Discover Inverclyde brand identities will be carried out to remove unnecessary sub-brands and provide an improved and clearer brand structure ensuring that the promotion of services is able to continue within a clear and consistent structure.

To support the development of place marketing a new Inverclyde tourism and place marketing strategy will be published focussing on the promotion of Inverclyde as a visitor destination and ensuring Inverclyde supports national tourism campaigning giving local businesses and venues the tools required to adopt the 'discover Inverclyde' place marketing theme to help reinforce the value of place and placemaking in all communications and marketing activity of the Council.

Annual plan

An annual plan will be created setting out the main areas of communications or engagement activity across the Council to aid forward planning and ensuring the Council is able to bring together activity under themes, for example bringing all activity across services related to Christmas into a common theme or business-related activity to support new business growth or start-ups.

Honest

Our communications approaches will always focus on ensuring messages and engagement can be trusted by the community as holding the highest levels of honesty and integrity.

The seven principles of public life, often called the Nolan Principles, of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership apply to political leaders, appointees, employees of all public services including the Civil Service and local government.

All communications and engagement activity carried out by the Council must comply with these principles to ensure residents have confidence and trust in what we are saying.

Mindful of legislation

Our communication and engagement activity must always be mindful of the legislative framework Scottish local government and health and social care services operate.

Our partnership in health and social care must ensure that cooperation across a range of organisations require local government employees and members to support the legislative duty on, for example, NHS Boards and Integration Joint Boards.

The duty to involve people and communities in planning how their public services are provided is enshrined in law in Scotland.

NHS Boards are bound by duties of public involvement set out in the NHS (Scotland) Act 1978 as amended by National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004.

For Integration Joint Boards engagement and participation duties are specified by the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

The duty to involve people in the design and delivery of care services was strengthened with the introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Publicity carried out by local authorities is guided principally by the Local authority publicity: code of practice published by the Scottish Government as directed by the Secretary of State for Scotland under Section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Inverclyde Council's local arrangements to comply with the code of practice is the Inverclyde Council Media and Social Media Protocol which embeds the principles and responsibilities in the code of practice into all council publicity include media and social media activity.

Operational updates will be incorporated into the protocol to ensure clarity over the support given to health and social care partnership is set out, work with partner organisations and to align communications by organisations receiving grants or

working on behalf of the council is clear and aligned to the publicity code and local version.

Engagement and consultation activity is guided by a range of legislative requirements. These will be incorporated into new consultation guidance to ensure the council fulfils its requirements while maximising the opportunity for people to engage with Council consultation and engagement activity.

The Council and IJB have statutory duties placed on them as Category 1 Responders, by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2005, which include ensuring arrangements are in place to warn & inform the public both before and during emergencies.

In addition, the Equality Act as the successor to the Disability Discrimination Act, seeks to ensure accessibility is not only around access to physical locations but that public agencies have a duty to ensure that communications and information is accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

By embedding a focus on protected characteristics into communications planning the aim of this strategy is to ensure that accessibility principles are built into communications and engagement activity.

Clear language and plain English

Communications plan templates will encourage services to focus content and mechanisms for communication and engagement on the needs of the audience rather than the needs of the writer.

Communication material at its best is written for the reader. Services will be encouraged to use plain English and clear language to ensure information is accessible and easily understand and unnecessarily bureaucratic language and acronyms are reduced or fully explained.

Reliable and up to date

Making sure that communications is up to date is crucial to ensure trust in mechanisms.

Dissatisfaction with poor, out of date or non-existent communications breeds complaints and silent dissatisfaction from residents, customers and employees.

Content on, for example, the website must be kept up to date and the existing processes allow for cut offs for content that has not been checked within a specified time. To ensure that it is up to date and, where appropriate, content will be unpublished if considered out of date, has no legislative reason to be there or has not been checked for over a year.

The action plan set out for this strategy aligns with the council's existing digital strategy which highlights the importance of reviewing channels to identify if any could or should be closed throughout the lifetime of that strategy to provide only those needed by customers.

Correspondence

As an organisation the council communicates by email and letter to a large number of people every week.

Ensuring consistency of approach is, for many organisation rooted in ensuring timescales are met for correspondence.

Outside of areas where the council has a statutory duty and reports on that either through key performance indicators or other mechanisms, arrangements for handling correspondence will be reviewed to ensure that the current timescales are being adhered to, whether they require to be altered, are in line with other similar organisations, are consistent and appropriate across services and to allow the corporate management team to review the routes into the Council.

This review will also examine the routes into the Council for correspondence from MPs, MSPs and councillors to provide the corporate management team with data on timescales and mapping the route into the Council to ensure correspondence is reliable and timely.

Communicating in a crisis.

The Council aims to ensure that everyone affected by an emergency or crisis situation are fully aware and hearing any updates from the council or affecting the Council in a timely way.

As a standard, emergency situations including severe weather emergencies, strikes and health emergencies would follow the crisis communications cascade.

The cascade, highlighted in appendix 3, broadly follows this pattern but can incorporate other specific service specific communications, such as letters to parents and carers for issues affecting schools and other education establishments.

During a civil contingency or emergency event that curtails the use of electronic mechanisms through the council network, for example during a power outage of the council buildings, the communications team would continue to provide a focal point focussed on cascading information using mobile devices, potentially including those not on the Council network or personal devices to cascade non sensitive information to networks.

In addition, a business case for a new web or digital platform will incorporate options for emergency mass and targeted communications to local audiences.

In the event of a power outage organisations with mobile 'boots on the ground' such as the police and other emergency services have the capacity to carry out direct face to face communications if required.

As part of the review of communications mechanisms planning for power outages, groups of employees will be identified for potential to be physically deployed as part of a face-to-face or community communications network to allow clear, consistent messaging to be deployed in the event of a significant power outage civil contingency emergency.

Delivering our goals

2023:

Action	Responsibility	What success looks like
Communications plan template	Communications team	The creation of a new template for use by services to build a consistent approach to communications and engagement planning and delivery for plans and projects. It would be used to set out the detail of a project to encourage services to build communications and engagement into project planning and would require to be logged, costed and signed off by the Council's communications team.
Promote and encourage Gaelic language through our communications mechanisms	Corporate Communications and Corporate Policy	Aim to render the corporate logo in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process Positive message that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome through website, information leaflets, email signature and the intranet. Incorporate new written guidance on the use of Gaelic in news releases and on social media in the Council's Media and Social Media Protocol as an operational update. Develop the information on the Council's Gaelic web page to encompass a wider range of information, with a view to providing a higher profile of Gaelic in Inverclyde Publish details of public consultation on key corporate documents bilingually
Co-ordination of consultation, engagement and surveys	Communications and policy teams	Creation of guidance and procedures for the co-ordination of all council surveys, consultations and questionnaires to ensure consistency, compliance with legislation, avoidance or minimising clashes and regular oversight for the corporate management team. Options will be investigated and costed for the creation of a dedicated online space for co-ordination of online surveys and consultation across the council to allow services to carry out

		surveys and consultations in a planned, consistent format. Creation of procedures for oversight of consultations the council should be inputting to from other agencies and organisations.
Update the Council, HSCP and Discover Inverclyde brand identities and streamline the current proliferation of brands and logos.	Communications team	An updated corporate identity manual published incorporating the Council, HSCP and Discover Inverclyde brand guidelines with streamlining of multiple sub brands across council and HSCP services consolidating the identity and branding for both the council and HSCP to provide clarity on the council's overarching 'look and feel' including an examination of areas such as signage, tone of voice in communications and alignment to place marketing.
Media and social media protocol	Communications team	Operational update to the existing Media and Social Media Protocol to highlight the support from the communications team for the HSCP and IJB and links to NHS communications and dissemination to HSCP employees and managers. Operational update to the Media and Social Media protocol to incorporate guidance to all council grants schemes to incorporate principles of the publicity code and council's media and social media protocol, making observance a condition of the grant with associated management and monitoring.
Review HSCP communications activity and resources	Communications service and HSCP SMT	Dedicated review carried out of HSCP communications activity and requirements including a review of existing and new mechanisms, resources and support.
Review of council groups, sub groups and working group activity	Communications team	A review of the activity of all groups and directorate planning activity (including working groups and sub groups) to identify communications activity and 'missed opportunities' to support improved forward planning
Review correspondence timescales	Communications team	A review of the council's existing correspondence timescales where they are in place and creation of proposals, if required, for change will be presented to the Corporate Management Team to ensure communications activity is timely and clear.
Discover Inverclyde place marketing strategy	Communications and Tourism team	A new Inverclyde tourism and place marketing strategy published.
Sponsorship review	Communications team	A review of sponsorship arrangements across the Council and HSCP services and creation of new guidance on sponsorship.

Support for national campaigns	Communications team	A review of arrangements for supporting national campaign requests including opportunities for 'lighting up' and other activity to prepare a clear gateway into the council for review, decision, and where appropriate, support.
Increase social media audience across main social media accounts and streamline small or rarely used sub-sites.	Communications team	Social media engagement and followers continue to increase, more and richer content focussed on main social media accounts and small audience or rarely used sub sites closed down.
Social media incorporation into customer service activity	Communications and Customer Services Team	Develop social media guidance, training and support for council employees including, potentially, customer service staff to respond to residents on council social media accounts
Develop manager training on communications and customer service	Communications and Customer Services Team	Review and updating of all existing training programmes and, if necessary, create a bespoke Inverclyde training programme for council managers on communications and customer services principles.
Develop employee training on communications and customer service	Communications and Customer Services Team	Review and updating of all existing training programmes and, if necessary, create a bespoke Inverclyde training programme for council managers on communications and customer services principles

Delivering our goals

2024:

Action	Responsibility	What success looks like
Annual campaigns planner	Communications team	Creation of an annual campaigns planner setting out the council's priorities for the year promotion of its own services and opportunities to support for partner campaigns.
One plan creation and production	Communications and policy teams	In line with the 'one council, one voice' principle, creation of 'one plan' as an annual publication for dissemination to the community and stakeholders designed to inform residents, businesses and partners of the council's priorities in the coming year.

A targeted employee communications campaign is in place to support the launch and implementation of |

		the 'one plan' annually encouraging employees to share the content.
Close down ICON, the council intranet	Communications, HR and IT teams	Removal of content from the existing intranet, ICON, moving it to the Council website or other more appropriate locations identified by council services
Build new direct employee communications mechanisms.	Communications team	New direct communications mechanisms to council employees across, for example, email and mobile phones for use in cascading messaging incorporating options for power outage with potential to link to, personal email/mobile contact.
Business case for a new website/digital communications platform	Communications and IT teams	Business case presented to the CMT highlighting proposals for a new website or other digital platform to improve communications and engagement by the council.
Publish first principle	Communications and information governance teams	Adopt a 'publish first' principle to information and data to encourage greater openness and accountability to ensure the council is in control of its information and to support the principles of freedom of information.

Measuring success

Monitoring of the action plan will be six monthly updates to the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Individual actions listed above may require specific reports or updates prior to the regular updates particularly where specific proposals are being developed such as the business case for a new website.

While measurement of success for the strategy and action plan will be on the delivery of actions, the overall aim is to increase engagement and communications activity and that each campaign, project and system change developed using the tools created will have its owns measurements such as wider recognition of the Council brand, increase audience, more traffic on mechanisms (eg website and social media).

The strategy and action plans aims to put in place the underlying guidance and mechanisms to support that activity.

Creation of a new communications plan template, for example, aims to improve communication planning and consistency and would build in clear objective setting and measurement of success for all future communications activity across the council.

While the audience for the communications strategy itself is chiefly internal colleagues, the implications of delivering the actions is to ensure that council communications activity actively identifies, examines and targets communications to its key stakeholders.

The aim also includes embedding protected characteristics under the Equality Act into communications planning to ensure services actively address any particular communications needs.

Measuring success against clearly set out objectives is expected to be a key component of individual measures, such as the creation of new communications plan templates.

They would aim to embed better planning of communications activity, clear objective setting and measurement of success to aid further improvement of communications activity.

APPENDIX 3: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS CASCADE

Step 1: Corporate Communications compile information and brief Chief Executive and Leader of the Council on content prior to distribution.

Step 2: Creation of a single trusted source of information for use throughout the situation to ensure people know where to go at any time for the most up to date position. Generally, this would be the council website, but may move to another location, either a physical location in a localised emergency or another off the council network digital channel such as social media in the case of a situation where the internal network is not available. That mechanism/location would be included in all cascade messages.

Step 3: Information updated to that location is then cascaded to the following groups:

- Councillors, corporate management team, council/local resilience management team (CRMT/LRMT)
- National political leaders (minimum all constituency and regional MSPs covering Inverclyde and constituency MP)
- Council customer service team
- Council and/or HSCP employees – message sent electronically must always include reference to further cascade to employees without access to internal electronic systems such as intranet/email
- Managers – reminder to further cascade to employees without access to internal electronic systems such as intranet/email.
- Media
- Website and social media updated - including relevant partners where appropriate and council sub social media sites.

Step 4: Corporate Communications manage response to any feedback or questions arising from the update into CRMT/LRMT or CMT depending on the circumstances and relevance.