

Report To: Policy and Resources Committee **Date:** 21 March 2017

Report By: Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications **Report No:** PR/08/17/WB/GB

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Subject: Communications Strategy

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to establish a communications strategy for Inverclyde Council to highlight the broad aims of the Council's communications with residents, employees, trades unions and visitors, the key mechanisms and approaches.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Appendix 1 sets out the broad communications strategy covering equalities and communication; media and media planning; employee engagement and workforce communications; communication during severe weather and social media and web development.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee approve the contents of appendix 1: communications strategy

Steven McNab
Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's Corporate Communications service delivers a range of communications campaign, marketing and design, and advertising on behalf of the Council and the HSCP.
- 4.2 The communications strategy included at appendix 1 highlights the broad approach to communications adopted by the service on behalf of the Council and seeks to consolidate that as the overarching principles by which Inverclyde Council and its services communicate with its stakeholders.
- 4.3 The strategy highlights existing practice for employee and workforce engagement and communication during major change and seeks to adopt that good practice as the overarching principle for internal communications in the Council.
- 4.4 The strategy will be kept under review.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial implications - One off Costs

There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

Financial Implications - Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if applicable)	Other Comments

5.2 Legal implications - There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

5.3 Human Resources implications – The communications strategy supports the continued communications and engagement with Council employees.

5.4 Equalities implications - The communications strategy includes equalities information and highlights the Council's communications obligations in relation to equality legislation.

Has an equality impact assessment been carried out?

Yes (see attached appendix)

No

5.5 Repopulation implications – Continued good communication across all Council services helps to support the Council's repopulation agenda to promote Inverclyde as a place to visit and to live.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Consultations have taken place with the workforce development and planning group and the Council's equalities officer.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

APPENDIX 1:

Inverclyde Council: Communications Strategy

Introduction:

This document outlines that our strategy is to use proactive communications to engage with our residents, enhance the reputation of the organisation, and keep staff informed and motivated.

To complement this we will also provide a comprehensive reactive service to robustly protect the Council from unfair criticism.

The strategy outlines:

- Equalities and communication
- Our key communications mechanism
- Our internal communications and engagement principles
- Website and social media communications
- How we will communicate during an emergency or disruption to services

Equalities and communication

There are nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 shown in the diagram below.



The Council has a legal obligation to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
- c) Foster good relations.

To progress these aims, inclusive communication is vital. This means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand. The Act requires public authorities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to avoid disadvantage and is clear that reasonable adjustment includes provision of information in an accessible format.

Inclusive communication makes services more accessible for everyone. It will help to achieve successful outcomes for individuals and the wider community. It enables people to live more independently and to participate in public life.

When examining communications mechanisms, consideration needs to be given to whether the method we have selected to communicate is appropriate for those that we wish to receive the message. Also, it should be in a language that they will understand. It may be necessary, in some instances, to use more than one method or have an important communication translated into another language or provide translation through use of the 'Language Line' telephone interpretation service.

Our communications mechanisms

The council has a range of communications mechanism which can be used by council services to promote key messages.

The list below is not exhaustive, but highlights the broad range of day-to-day communications mechanisms employed by Inverclyde Council

Internal	External (print-based)	External (media)	External (online and social)	External (other)
ICON – council intranet	InView newspaper (Spring and Winter)	Press release issued to press and media.	InView newspaper digital edition (Spring and Winter)	Attendance at events or exhibitions
Printed briefings emailed to heads of service for dissemination to staff without PC access.	Publications; leaflets, flyers.	Photocall arranged for press and media.	Social media promotion (organic)	Representation on external bodies (officers)
All member briefings	Partner publications and newsletters	Responding to press and media enquiries.	Social media promotion (paid for)	Representation on external bodies (councillors)
All council emails (issued by corporate communications)	Outdoor advertising (paid for including sites available through partners, eg Riverside Inverclyde sites)	Promotional and public notice advertising in print publications and magazines	Council website news and page content.	Supporting partner campaigns (eg NHS; Police Scotland, COSLA)
Event calendar	Banners and signage	Interviews/filing opportunities arranged for press and media.	Event listings	
Posters on noticeboards		Features in newspapers and magazines.	Plasma screens (2) in Customer Service Centre, Greenock.	
		Event listings	Online advertising on local news websites (eg Inverclyde Now and Greenock Telegraph).	
		Columns in the Greenock Telegraph and other publications		
Insider Council update publication				
Directors brief (HSCP)				
Joint budget group (trade union)				
All member briefings				
Extended corporate management team				

Any new campaign developed by a council service will aim to maximise the use of existing communications mechanisms before creating new ones.

Media and media planning

The council will always co-operate fully and openly with the press and media.

The council's media and social media protocol sets out the guidance which govern press and media publicity. This sets out how the press and media communications function operates and dovetails that guidance with social media activity across the council.

Every effort will be made to meet deadlines and ensure that the Council's message is heard.

We will also work hard to be as proactive as possible so the Council can stay on the front foot and promote its messages to residents and visitors to help ensure they are informed about and able to access local services.

Internal or workforce communications

The Council's internal communications and engagement is well developed for major communications programmes, particularly around budget setting and staff engagement.

The council's corporate management team have regular engagement with trade union representatives through the joint budget group which examines change and budget programmes in consultation with representatives.

During any time of major change or during budget decisions where those decisions could impact on individuals or staff, the internal or workforce communications principle is that employees should receive updates direct and face to face from line manager.

The overall aim is to ensure that employees receive news and updates first from their line manager prior to reading about it in the media.

That could involve advance briefings prior to committee reports being available in the public domain or alerts to employees informing them when public reports are available and encouraging them to review them.

Where appropriate, heads of service and service managers will receive briefings or Q&As to lead discussions to ensure that they have the facts available to provide updates.

Intranet and email:

The council intranet and established emails from corporate communications will be used to communicate key messages. These messages will also be sent to heads of service to cascade to employees who do not have access to the intranet and/or email.

Insider council update:

Insider council update is published after each council meeting to provide a regular update to council employees on key decisions and updates from the Chief Executive. This is produced as pdf, published on the intranet and emailed to employees. A copy is also sent to heads of service to cascade to employees who do not have access to the intranet and/or email.



Design and campaigns

The Council's Corporate Communications service is responsible for design and development of communications and marketing campaigns.

A corporate identity manual is available for Inverclyde Council and for the Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership as a working document to guide how the council's and the HSCP visual identities are displayed in various formats.

No material should be produced which breaches these.

The council's design and marketing functions will continue to support all council and HSCP services in developing communications material and in developing creative campaigns.

The design service will continue to engage with the national Creative Exchange to share knowledge and expertise across the wider public sector.

InView newspaper

The council newspaper, InView, is produced twice-a-year, usually around Spring and Winter, and is delivered to every home in Inverclyde.

The content, production and design are carried out in-house by Corporate Communications.

The editorial content of InView aims to reflect the news, policies, decisions and events planned and managed by Inverclyde Council and, where appropriate, by its partners.

Where possible joint promotional opportunities will be made available to partners, for example supporting health and social care promotions or campaigns.

In addition to the printed edition, Inview is also published as a digital edition and made available on the council website and promoted through social media and development will continue to develop the Inview 'brand' for all online and printed newsletters for Inverclyde Council.



Social media

The overall management of social media sits with Corporate Communications, though individual council services and schools are authorised to engage in social media activity.

This authorisation is based on sites being actively used and operated in line with the Council's 'media and social media protocol'.

Built into that protocol is an annual review each year of all social media accounts across the council to assess their engagement levels and relevancy.

The main council social media accounts for the council are managed and operated by Corporate Communications staff and council services seeking to develop social media campaigns should engage with that service.

Disruption to services communications

During civil contingency or periods of disruption to Council services, Corporate Communications will follow the process map below to inform residents of any local issues.

The Council website – www.inverclyde.gov.uk - will be the single trusted source of updated content to allow residents, the media, council employees and customer services staff to obtain real time updates.

In the case of severe winter weather disruption to services, a dedicated page is published at www.inverclyde.gov.uk/winter

Corporate Communications staff will be available during out of office hours to ensure updates can be made to social media during severe winter weather. Council services are required to ensure that any change or update to normal council services, including but not limited to closure of services, is communicated through corporate communications using the disruption to service and severe winter weather communications process.

Disruption to service and severe winter weather communications:

MESSAGES AGREED:

Action: Message agreed at CRMT/service managers/heads of service with corporate communications.

WEBSITE UPDATE:

Action: Update council website. During severe winter weather the update will be on the page: '[.../winter](#)' Any changes to service should be highlighted on front page 'news' section.

ISSUE UPDATE TO PRESS AND MEDIA:

Action: Send website content, link to web page and link to twitter to press and media. Highlight any changes (facilities/roads closed/open /expected times/days for reopening). Ensure Scottish Government resilience email are included in update

ALERT TO COUNCILLORS AND CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Action: Email update and link to council website sent to: councillors, CMT, head of HR, OD and comms, and communications team. Highlight any changes (facilities/ roads closed/open)

EMAIL CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE:

Action: send email with link to council website to 'A' mail list for customer service officers.

ICON UPDATE:

Action: Promote link to *web page (eg.../winter)* on ICON news section.
Include any updates relevant to employees and in extreme cases issues an all employee email.

PARTNER/COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES UPDATE:

Action: Update social media and forward update and/or link to partner
or other council social media sites.

Civil contingencies

In addition, to the specific weather related emergency process, Corporate Communications link to the West of Scotland Resilience Communications Plan to provide communications support during emergency or civil contingency situations.

Web development

Key to the success of online communications channels is ensuring content is kept fresh and up-to-date.

A core web team has been set up, consisting of around 8 staff members from customer services, corporate communications, ICT and each directorate.

The team will be supported by web authors from each service responsible for uploading content to the website.

This web team will have full editorial and publishing rights for all web sites and have sufficient knowledge of their service areas to make decisions on content.

This core team will act as a direct conduit back to any specialised web sites within their service areas and all requests for new web developments related to the council and its partners must be reviewed and approved by the group.

The core web team will also manage all requests for additional content and change requests for the web sites. The team will meet on a quarterly basis at least and will deliver meeting reports to digital access group (DAG). The team will be responsible for the creation of a new web and online strategy.

The roles and responsibilities are as follows:-

Corporate communications:

- Overall editorial responsibility for the council website and all council online communication channels
- Arrange, facilitate and chair the meetings of the web team on a quarterly basis and ensure that agendas and minutes are generated and made available to team members.
- Channel any requests for any website or other online channels to the core web team for approval.
- Prepare any papers requesting funding or resources for future enhancements to the web site(s) or other online channels for submission to DAG

Customer services:

- Oversee the transactional element of the web site, which will include handling enquires relating to problems with transactional elements such as customers having problems making a payment or opening a link
- In parallel with more services/facilities moving online, it will also be important to manage the Kana knowledgebase and scripts available to customer service centre staff to ensure that this information is consistent with information being presented online.
- Ensure new web developments proposed are directed to the web team for review and approval.

ICT:

- Deal with any technical issues within content management system (CMS), Liaise with supplier
- Technical support to web authors and training in the new content management system.
- Ensure new web developments proposed are directed to the web team for review and approval.

Directorate representatives:

- Identification and link with web authors
- Support the web team to deliver web and digital strategy
- Ensure new web developments proposed from within the directorate are directed to the web team for review and approval.

Web authors:

To support the above web team web authors provide and maintain content primarily for their own service areas. The automation features of the content management system will help this group stay in control of content within their remit.