

# **CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – FIRST EVALUATION January 2007**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr C Giel

**LEAD OFFICER:** Hilary Mitchell

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Hilary Mitchell

**Summary:** This reports an evaluation of the Council's progress in delivering its corporate Communications Strategy

<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Resources) notes the Council's position with regard to progress in delivering the corporate Communications Strategy
------------------------	---

<b>Impact on delivering corporate objectives</b>	Achieving targets in the Communications Strategy will support the delivery of the Council's Corporate objectives
--	--

<b>Impact on other statutory objectives (eg Crime and Disorder and LA21 )</b>	Communications capacity supports delivery of other statutory objectives
---	---

<b>Financial and human resource implications</b>	The reduced level of resources available during 2006 has impacted upon progress made in delivering the Communications strategy
--	--

<b>Project and Risk Management</b>	The risks of not being maintain progress have been mitigated to some extent through interim management arrangements
------------------------------------	---

<b>Key Decision Status</b>	No
<b>Financial</b>	No

<b>Other ward implications?</b>	All wards are affected
---------------------------------	------------------------

## **1. BACKGROUND**

Copeland Borough Council conducted a Best Value review of corporate communications in 2004/5, and the findings of the review were agreed by Executive on 14 February 2005. The main recommendations were:

<b>Number</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1	<b>Resources</b>	Team to consist of minimum of two, one at a senior level; to deliver recommendations of BV review and make a significant difference to all

		aspects of communications within the organisation
2	<b>Culture</b>	All Managers' job profiles to include responsibility for delivery of communications strategy
3	<b>Corporate Identity and Branding</b>	Develop a new logo and corporate identity
4	<b>Style Guide</b>	Develop a style guide that outlines how new logo and image are to be used
5	<b>Strategy</b>	Develop a communications strategy for internal and external communications, and implementation plan; identify audiences, key message, means of achievement, working with partnerships
6	<b>Knowledge management</b>	Development of a knowledge management culture, including electronic press inquiry log, log of consultation results and outcomes, feedback to consultees
7	<b>Website</b>	Editorial control allocated and adequately resourced as part of restructure
8	<b>Communications planning</b>	Structure and plan for media and communications, including a robust forward plan, media diary and consultation diary.
9	<b>Publications</b>	Coordination of all publications through communications team
10	<b>Emergency Planning</b>	Inclusion of emergency planning in jds of senior managers and comms team;

Following agreement to the improvement plan by Executive the recommendation for an additional post in the team was factored into the corporate restructure which took effect from 1 June 2005. A Communications Manager was appointed and took up his post in September 2005.

With the benefit of additional resource the recommendations of the Best Value review were incorporated into a Communications Strategy. This was agreed by Executive on 23 May 2006. An action plan for the Communication Strategy was sought by Executive, and a review date of six months set for a first evaluation of progress. The attached table shows progress to date on implementation of the Communications Strategy, linked to the Best Value Review recommendations.

## Updates

A number of the elements in the Communication Strategy remain to be tackled and the resource difficulties experienced during 2006 have delayed the progress on other items in the action plan. Delays in communication improvements are impeding progress with a range of other corporate initiatives.

Use of websites as a significant communications channel is growing and the Council's current presence on the web does not reflect well on the performance of the Council. Central and local Government business is transferring to electronic channels. Customers of the Council's services, both local and from further afield increasingly expect to be able to transact business via the website. The Communications Manager role has had responsibility for co-ordinating the direction and management of the website, and it is important that this work is prioritised.

The Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" sets a direction for local government and its future relationship with communities. The community leadership role set out in the White Paper anticipates local authorities and their members working more closely with communities. This would include involving local people in a range of ways in helping to take decisions, challenge performance and contribute to service improvement. The scale of community engagement is beyond what Copeland and many other authorities have previously tried. Improving communications activities and skills is essential for this area.

Copeland Borough Council carries out consultation in many services and with a range of individuals and communities. The results of consultation feed into improvement plans for services and corporately. It can be seen from the above that there will be a continuing need to maintain contact with customers, citizens and stakeholders. To make the best use of resources we should aim to improve our techniques and effectiveness in this, and share the results of consultation in a more co-ordinated way.

A survey of staff attitudes has been commissioned for 2007 by HR and Communications and its results will feed into a number of areas of work, and an improvement plan will be produced. As well as needing to communicate the results of the survey, it is likely that internal communications will require further development. A repeat survey should be undertaken after a period of time to measure improvements.

There are occasional incidents which require communication management in order to maintain our improving relationships with the press and broadcast media. There are still areas we need to address to ensure that we can both respond to requests for information from the media and reflect fairly on the work of the Council.

The vacant post of Communications Manager has been subject to a recruitment freeze until March 2007. It is intended that the post will be filled as soon as possible thereafter to restore resource levels to tackle the communication priorities.

There has been limited training in communication skills in-house or externally. When resources permit it is intended to start a programme of relevant, cost effective training in communications skills.

The priorities for delivery of the Communication Strategy in 2007/8 therefore are:

- Website- develop and deliver improvement plan for website, involving services to improve content
- Community Engagement – respond to White Paper to develop new means and techniques of involving the community more in service and policy development
- Consultation – survey of previous exercises and plan for more efficient use of consultation in future, perhaps through community Gateway
- Staff attitude survey – develop and deliver improvement plan for internal communication
- Develop a media crisis management strategy
- Recruit a full-strength team
- Develop communication skills for managers and members
- Schools Forum – resource has been a problem, but it is now to be delivered through other routes
- Brand and Identity development – this issue is dependent on resources being available to research and produce a scheme, which is then taken up through a style guide, new livery and marketing

**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN**

Objectives	Quarter 2 2006/7	Quarter 3 2006/7	Quarter 4 2006/7	Quarter 1 2007/8	Quarter 2 2007/8	Quarter 3 2007/8	Quarter 4 2007/8	Performance Measure	Progress
<b>Raise and Maintain Profile of CBC among external audiences</b>									
<b>Improving customer satisfaction (BVR 5)</b>	Customer First group; New comms plan	Triennial customer satisfaction survey	Receive initial findings from triennial survey	Review findings from triennial survey	Create new comms plan from survey results	Monitor and deliver plan	Monitor & delivery	Customer satisfaction survey results	On target
<b>Publications (BVR 9)</b>	Plan for new Copeland Matters; ; Publish special Copeland Matters/A-Z	Launch the new Copeland Matters	Publish Copeland Matters; Publish Council Tax/BVPP leaflet		Publish Copeland Matters	Publish Copeland Matters; Develop corporate publications format		Customer satisfaction survey results; customer reaction to Copeland Matters	On target – reduction in cost of production of Copeland Matters
<b>Brand\Identity Development (BVR 3, 4)</b>		Develop style guide		Pilot and feedback on new Style Guide	Launch Style Guide and implement across services	Review of signage and vehicle livery	Survey internal and external customers		Delayed
<b>Supporting CBC community leadership efforts (BVR 5)</b>	Plan schools forum in Local Democracy Week; Monitor devt of area fora	Schools Forum in Local Democracy Week; plan for mock elections	Run mock elections; Make use of LSP Skills and Knowledge Programme of community engagement	Review Council's response to LG White Paper requirements				Feedback from schools, young people	Delayed – Youth Councils now taken up by Leisure and Env team
<b>Support and assist service improvement objectives</b>									
Objectives	Quarter 2 2006/7	Quarter 3 2006/7	Quarter 4 2006/7	Quarter 1 2007/8	Quarter 2 2007/8	Quarter 3 2007/8	Quarter 4 2007/8	Performance Measure	Progress
<b>Work with</b>	Service	Planning for	The Beacon	Service	Service	Service	Service	Service	On target -

<b>services, initiatives (BVR 2, 5)</b>	comms plans as required	running campaign for recycling	comms strategy; Nuclear Policy Statement consultation; Service team meetings	comms – waste management	comms plans as required	comms plans as required	comms plans as required	Comms plans delivered	responded as requested
<b>Consultation (BVR 5, 6, 8)</b>		Audit of consultation	Publish consultation plan;		Implement e-consultation				Delayed
<b>Improving access to Council (BVR 5,7,8)</b>	Supporting work of Equality & Diversity Group; support for Customer First Group on access channels		Review of corporate complaints handling	Undertake EIA	Develop improvement plan	Implementing plan	Implementing plan	Implementing plan	On target until review of what is required to meet level 2 of Equalities Standard for LG—now likely to be delayed
<b>Partnership working (BVR ,5 8, 10)</b>	WCSF Comms Gp; Emergency Planning Comms Gp; CDRP, County Comms Group	LSP News Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Ongoing work	Work progressing satisfactorily until mid-November
<b>Generate positive media coverage for the Council</b>									
<b>Media relations (BVR 8)</b>	Introduce Newsping; What the Papers Say	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Maintain positive relationships with key journalists. Improve positive coverage by 5%.pa	Balance of positive to negative stories measured by Newsping. Media now more engaged in joint

									working
<b>Foster a communications culture within the Council</b>									
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2007/8</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Internal Communications</b>  (BVR 2, 5, 8)	Staff conferences; The Word; Plan staff attitude survey; Maintain Team Talk	Staff attitude survey; Publish The Word;	Publish The Word Xmas special; Staff conferences	Staff attitude improvement plan developed; Publish The Word; Staff conferences; Intranet review	Publish The Word; Review Team Talk process & format	Publish The Word	Publish The Word	Results of staff attitude survey for benchmark'; The Word shortlisted for comms industry award	3 editions of The Word published up to end January; staff attitude survey in progress; Intranet review in progress
<b>Training, Development of CBC Members &amp; Officers</b>  (BVR 2)	Develop media training	Run media training	Issue guidance on media skills	Media skills health check		Media training		Participant feedback Subjective judgement about performance	On target. Media protocols published
<b>Devt of comms skills in organisation</b>  (BVR 2)				Plain English toolbox for managers	Investigate public speaking training				Not started
<b>Capacity for Comms Professionals</b>  (BVR 1, 7)	Monitor e-skills	Monitor e-skills					Maintain skills, particularly e-comms		On target. Budget for e-training for 2007/8
<b>Review progress</b>  (BVR 5)		Evaluation of progress so far for report to OSC P&R				Evaluation of progress so far for report to OSC P&R			Delayed

<b>Further develop the website as an external comms tool</b>									
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2006/7</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2007/8</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2007/8</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>EComms (BVR 7)</b>	Dev't of the website; Establish web group	Review website, survey and discuss with managers	Refreshed website online	Develop website improvement plan					Delayed. Work now started
<b>Create a crisis management strategy</b>									
<b>Crisis management (BVR 2, 5, 8)</b>	Develop and publish "What To Do Now" guide	Develop crisis management protocols	Review and strengthen emergency call-out procedures					Protocols in place	Delayed



