

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
6 May 2014

Subject: MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

All Wards
Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Health: Councillor Mrs S Shepherd

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

1.1 It is proposed to have a document which sets out its longer term plan for marketing itself or communicating with its various stakeholders. The attached document sets out such a strategy.

2.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

2.1 This document will be key in terms of the Council's priority for customer service and customer care, as it will set out the higher level objectives not just for the Customer Services section of the Council but customer care corporately, across the organisation.

3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

3.1 There are no risks with adopting this strategy.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 All of the objectives are deliverable within the Council's current budgets, therefore there are no financial implications associated with this report.

4.2 In the fullness of time there may be some efficiencies which arise out of the way we deal with customers using electronic communication rather than face to face.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

6.1 The document will create a framework that will ensure the Council meets its equality obligations when communicating.

6.2 The document will be available on the Council's website and will be available in different formats if required.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION:

7.1 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council that the Marketing and Communications Strategy be adopted.

DAVID GOODWIN

Background papers: None
Author ref: DRG
Contact: David Goodwin
Director of Leisure and Health
01609 767147

060514 Marketing and Communications Strategy

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL CORPORATE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Communication is at the heart of everything we do. Not only is it key to strengthening links with local people, service users, partner organisations and staff, it is crucial to ensuring we deliver our vision and priorities. As such this Strategy links with and is an integral part of the Council's Business Plan.

It's vital, that we talk, listen and respond to local people's needs – shaping services when necessary and framing our messages so everyone is informed and empowered. We try to take every opportunity for people to tell us what they think and we change things when we get it wrong.

Marketing is often seen as a process applied to the commercial world, ultimately resulting in a "cash profit". It is equally applicable to the District Council, as are the various tools and techniques used in marketing, but with the profit being measured in terms of customer/resident satisfaction.

This Corporate Marketing and Communications Strategy shows that marketing and communications are not an after thought at Hambleton District Council – they play a vital role in everything we do.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- We recognise that good quality communication is essential for the effective delivery of our services
- We are keen to be as transparent, open and accountable as possible
- We will ensure information is shared, accessible and meets equality standards
- All our communication – spoken, written and electronic – will:
 - be honest, accurate, timely and up-to-date
 - be clear, using plain English and easily understood
 - be consistent and suitable for the audience – including hard to reach groups
 - meet the Hambleton District Council's corporate style
- We will monitor and measure our effectiveness in communicating
- We will ensure that our work complies with relevant legal requirements and conforms to the Code of Conduct on Local Government publicity.

KEY MESSAGES

- To listen to local people and deliver high quality, value for money services
- To improve the health of local people and help them live independently
- To look after Hambleton and create environmentally friendly communities
- To strengthen the local economy and tackle poverty in our communities
- To create safer communities and tackle anti-social behaviour
- To improve opportunities for leisure, learning and culture
- To promote Hambleton as a great place to live, work and visit

CURRENT RESOURCES

The Council employs a small communications team which will co-ordinate and support the marketing and communications of the Council. It is the responsibility of individual service areas and therefore all employees to contribute to the implementation of this Council Strategy, by adopting the key principles previously referred to:-

The Marketing and Communications Team currently provides:

- Media and PR support to services areas – press releases, media monitoring, media management, crisis management
- Photo management
- Corporate identity management
- Graphic design and publication production
- Website management
- Emergency Planning communications support
- External communications – newsletters (eg to Parish Councils)
- Internal communications – Members and officers (Council Talk & Insight)
- Service communications (eg Housing newsletter)
- A communications service for Richmondshire District Council through a 3 year SLA - equivalent to 50% of staffing resource.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

KEY RESPONSIBILITY FOR DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

- **Elected Members**
The District Council's politically elected representatives are a vital channel of communication between the Authority and local communities throughout Hambleton. Elected every four years, they set the Council's policies and spending priorities and are accountable for them. They provide local people with the opportunity to raise issues of concern. As well as being informed about events and services in their local Ward, Members also need to be kept up-to-date with major corporate projects/events/issues which could affect Council taxpayers.
- **Management Team**
Communication is a priority for the Council's Management Team (the Chief Executive and three Directors). The team will identify external and internal communication issues and opportunities as an integral part of individual service plans. It will communicate key corporate decisions to Heads of Service, Section Heads and other staff accurately, clearly and speedily so they can be shared with all employees as appropriate.

- **Marketing and Communications Team**
Day to day management of the Authority's communication function is a key responsibility of the Marketing and Communications Team. It is responsible for leading on all corporate communication issues and on media relations. However, all the Authority's service sections share the responsibility to communicate effectively.
- **Heads of Service/Section Heads**
Team Leaders also have responsibility for creating awareness of, and implementing, the Communications Strategy among their teams. They should also establish two-way channels of communication with all members of their teams. This will ensure employees are aware of key Council and service decisions and, importantly, provide opportunities for feedback from employees to the Management Team.
- **All Employees**
Each and every District Council employee has some responsibility for communicating with the public. It is important that our key principles for communication are followed so that accurate, honest, appropriate and timely information flows openly from the organisation at all levels. It is also vital that our employees are kept well informed about the Council's key themes, targets and performance.

MEDIA CONTACT POLICY

All media enquiries – made to officers in their professional capacity – should be referred immediately to the Council's Marketing and Communications Team. The only exception is when the answer to a question is contained in factually published information, which would normally be available to the press and public.

The decision to issue a comment, press release or statement, or to grant an interview will be taken by the Marketing and Communications Team after consulting the relevant Director and Cabinet Member.

Officers of the Authority should not agree to speak as a representative of the Council at public meetings without the approval of the appropriate Director. The exception to this rule applies to officers who, as members of professional bodies, are asked to speak at meetings or conferences on technical issues associated with their profession.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 2 YEARS

- Develop a marketing and communications improvement plan
- Develop and improve the Hambleton District Council website and link to the CRM – ongoing
- Develop the website considering Channel shift; efficiencies and Hambleton residents' preferences for doing business
- Explore the use of corporate social media - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs

- Develop new branding for Hambleton District Council: costing out complete rebranding and implications before any scheme undertaken
- Support service area campaigns – Council Tax reduction scheme (H&RDC – Spring 2013); advertising on Hambleton District Council refuse trucks (ongoing); Sowerby Sports Village recreational area; recycling changes (Spring 2013)
- Develop and review Council Talk as a means of improving Member communications - ongoing
- Launch new internal Communications Plan and review – launch October 2014
- Review 'Insight' - new internal staff newsletter - as vehicle for staff communications
- Afford a high profile for the communication of key Council projects – using campaigns, public consultation exercises
- Respond appropriately to any customer feedback
- Produce regular newsletters – parish (quarterly); strategic forum (monthly); housing (quarterly); Members and staff (twice monthly)
- Maintain and develop strong links with local media
- Media training for Officers and Members
- Explore raising the profile of Hambleton as a District
- Organise events to raise the profile of sections of our community eg Sports Awards, Community Awards
- Organise face to face liaison meetings with key community group eg Businesses