

## **HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Cabinet  
5 November 2019

**Subject:** COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

**All Wards**  
**Portfolio Holder for Governance: Councillor Mrs I Sanderson**

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### **1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the recent activities in response to the January 2019 LGA peer review of communications and to seek Cabinet approval to implement a corporate communications strategy and supporting recommendations.
- 1.2 In January 2019, the Council engaged in a LGA peer review of communications and while the review team found there to be 'many positive examples of communications', they also identified several recommendations for improvement.
- 1.3 A key recommendation was that the Council should employ a senior level communications resource to further review existing communications arrangements and develop a communications strategy and fit for purpose solution to corporate communications.
- 1.4 Following a procurement exercise, the appointed consultants, Promodo Ltd have been working with Members and officers on site since May 2019 to produce a Communications Strategy Paper (**Annex A**), which articulates a new approach to communication activities.
- 1.5 The strategy highlights four disciplines of communication to be delivered by the Council's Communications team:
  - Corporate Communications
  - Internal Communications
  - News
  - Creative Services
- 1.6 Further supporting documents to the strategy are included here for reference and are: the HDC Communications Plan 2019/2023 (**Annex B**) which details the activities to be undertaken across the four key areas of communication referred to above; and the Annual Communications Reporting and Evaluation matrix (**Annex C**) which clearly sets out the suggested arrangements for monitoring and evaluating communications activities.
- 1.7 The recommended model to deliver communications activities is for the existing staff involved in core communications work to be brought together into one team, managed by a Corporate Communications Manager who would have oversight of all communications activities across the council.
- 1.8 Communications is currently managed as part of the Customer Service and Communications Manager role, however, the recommendations of the engaged consultants Promodo Ltd is that the Council would benefit from increased professional communications experience and skills to provide the knowledge and ability to deliver the new strategy.

- 1.9 Further to the Communications Strategy Paper and the suggested structure, consideration will be given to this operational matter as to how best to deliver this service.
- 1.10 The LGA Peer Review also suggested that a regular residents' survey to test perceptions and better understand what matters to local people, as well as how they would prefer to engage with the Council would be of benefit in improving council communications. A model set of questions has been established by the LGA for second tier district authorities and it is proposed that this is used as a base survey, adapted for the Hambleton area.

## **2.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

- 2.1 A Corporate Communications Strategy links to all Council priorities and is a key part of ensuring delivery through effective communication with partners and engaging effectively with local residents and businesses.

## **3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:**

- 3.1 The key risk is in not approving the recommendation(s) as shown below:-

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Implication</b>	<b>Gross Prob</b>	<b>Gross Imp</b>	<b>Gross Total</b>	<b>Preventative action</b>	<b>Net Prob</b>	<b>Net Imp</b>	<b>Net Total</b>
Communications activities are not planned and delivered effectively or in a strategic manner.	Negative impact on communications with partners and stakeholders affects delivery of projects and key council priorities.  Poor engagement with local residents and businesses negatively affects the reputation of the council.	4	5	20	Deliver communications in a corporate manner through planned and strategic activities informed by local understanding.	2	3	6

Prob = Probability, Imp = Impact, Score range is Low = 1, High = 5

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 4.1 The financial implications as a result of the revised structure will be reported to Members at the earliest opportunity in the Quarterly Revenue Monitoring report and the Budget for 2020/21.
- 4.2 The estimated cost of the resident survey at £25,300 will be financed from the current budget.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications considered with this report.

## **6.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 6.1 Equality and Diversity Issues have been considered however there are no issues associated with this report.

## **7.0    RECOMMENDATIONS:**

7.1    It is recommended that:-

- (1)    Cabinet approves and recommends to Council the strategic approach to communications as set out in the HDC Communications Strategy Paper (Annex A); and
- (2)    that Cabinet agrees the proposal to undertake a Residents Survey in 2019/20 and repeat every four years.

HELEN KEMP  
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING

**Background papers:**        LGA Communications Peer Review Hambleton District Council  
Feedback Report 16-18 January 2019.

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