
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

Chief Executive's Unit

15 October 2009

Communications Strategy and Action Plan

1. SUMMARY

A new communications strategy and action plan has been developed in line with the Council's Improvement Plan. This report and draft strategy provides an opportunity for Councillors to input into the strategic direction of the Council's corporate communications function. Other strategic Council initiatives have informed the revised strategy such as audits, Process for Change, Public Performance Reporting and Community Engagement.

The first stage in improving our communications as a Council is to agree on the high level recommendations within the communications strategy and to agree to implement the action plan (see attached strategy and action plan document). The action plan is designed within the Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework and the activities within it will complement and enhance activity that is already ongoing.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Executive:

- i) Considers the attached strategy and action plan
- ii) Endorses the communications objectives and outcomes
- iii) Agrees the communications strategy and supports the implementation of its recommendations and action plan (subject to changes recommended by the Executive)

3. DETAIL

The communications objectives will support the overall needs and priorities of the Council. Measurement of their success is paramount so outcomes and success measures are outlined within the action plan. The key action plan items are highlighted below, beneath each of the communications objectives and more detail can be found in the attached communications strategy and action plan document:

- Support cultural change within the Council
 - Develop a user-friendly communications toolkit;
 - Develop communications governance protocols;

- Develop a communications module into the Members Development programme and the Senior Managers' Development Programme;
 - Continue to deliver programme of Chief and Senior Officer (COSO) meetings; Carry out an employee survey and a Members' workshop to look at the Council's vision, values and goals in line with the Corporate Plan review;
 - Develop and agree annual operational/ service-based communications plans in line with service planning process;
 - Develop and implement a programme of bulletins, blogs and updates to target groups (departmental, Council-wide and Councillors)
- Develop positive relationships amongst stakeholders
 - Implement revised staff suggestion scheme;
 - Carry out a customer satisfaction and perception survey via Citizen's Panel; Support Councillors in promoting their surgeries by ensuring Councillor profile information is up to date online
 - Increase awareness of the Council's vision and services
 - Carry out campaigns in line with topical themes calendar and service-based communications plans;
 - Implement the Web Strategy;
 - Develop and implement a programme of bulletins and updates to target groups (CPP and Citizens)
 - Strengthen the Council's image and reputation
 - Develop and implement a proactive media calendar in line with service-based communications plans and topical themes calendar;
 - Celebrate successes through identifying a range of awards;
 - Develop a series of media briefing events/meetings with Council Leader, Chief Executive and Directors and Spokespeople as appropriate

4. CONCLUSION

In order to improve the way we communicate and to achieve the communications objectives, it is important to ensure that key stakeholders are involved in the communications process so that we are all aware of what we are trying to achieve and that good communication is embedded in the way we work as an organisation. This involvement is not only important at the beginning of the process but also on an ongoing basis. The strategy will be monitored regularly so that we can continually improve and measure our success in achieving the communications objectives.

5. IMPLICATIONS

<i>Policy</i>	The development of the Communications Strategy is identified in the Council's Improvement Plan.
<i>Finance</i>	Budgets to be identified for Strategic Communications activity and for service communications activity as part of the service planning process

- Personnel* Appropriate training and support that is required to deliver the action plan will be provided.
- Legal* Data protection, FOI and DDA obligations to be met when implementing all activities.
- Equal Opportunities* All communications activity will be in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and will be accessible to all.

For further information please contact:

Jane Fowler
Head of Improvement and HR
Chief Executive's Unit
Tel: 01546 604466



Communications Strategy 2009-2012

A strategy and action plan for a strong reputation and a positive relationship amongst our people, our partners and those we serve

Author	Improvement and Strategic HR
Owner	Chief Executive's Unit
Date	August 2009
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Strategic Communications Strategy Contents

Strategy Modification 5

1.0 Introduction 6

2.0 Where are we now? – Communications audit..... 7

3.0 Where do we want to be? – Objectives and outcomes.....10

Communications Objectives..... 10

4.0 How will we get there? – Strategy10

Approach 10

Communications Recommendations..... 11

Internal Communications 12

External Communications 13

5.0 Are we getting there/how did we do? – Measurement and evaluation14

6.0 Further Guidance.....15

Legislation and guidance 15

Links to supporting strategies and frameworks 15

Appendices.....17

Appendix One – MORI research on customer satisfaction with Council vs. Information Provided 17

Appendix Two – Citizen’s Panel Survey Feedback on Information Provision from Council Services 18

Appendix Three – 2009 – 2012 Strategic Communications Strategy Action Plan..... 19

Strategy Modification

Date	Version	Author
27.07.09	4.4	Lynda Syed and Carys Wynn-Mellor
11.08.09	4.5	Lynda Syed and Carys Wynn-Mellor
14.11.09	4.6	Lynda Syed and Carys Wynn-Mellor

1.0 Introduction

The current vision for Argyll and Bute is to be the **Leading Rural Area** and the Council aims to support this through being a **forward looking** council, working for **vibrant communities** and an **outstanding environment**. We need to share and develop our vision with all of our stakeholders – Councillors, employees, partners, citizens and customers, so that together we can achieve our goals.

This strategy is driven by the Council's Improvement Plan and is an integral part of our cultural journey of change. In order to make the improvements successful, we need to involve Councillors, employees, customers and partners. To build positive relations and continue to improve our reputation amongst all stakeholders, we must ensure that we are accountable through open, honest, transparent, accessible, relevant and engaging communication in line with public performance reporting, best value and best practice.

Good two-way communication can help to build the psychological contract, in which employees feel valued by their employer, and the employer values (and is seen to value) employees' contributions.

Enhanced employee commitment should in turn feed into improved work performance, reduce employee turnover and make it easier to recruit good employees because the employer has a positive image.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2009

Reputation is every organisation's most valuable asset.

It has a direct and major impact on the corporate well-being of every organisation.

Chartered Institute of Public Relations 2009

Communications is a cross-cutting issue which affects the whole Council. Good two-way communication lies at the very heart of council business - informing communities about our services, how we deliver them and how they can be accessed. In turn, feedback informs our strategic thinking, shapes our services and influences how we deliver them. This strategy demonstrates how we aim to communicate with our stakeholders and help them to contribute to achieving our goals. The following communications cycle ensures that our communications activity is two-way and that it encourages a strong dialogue amongst stakeholders. Continual monitoring and evaluation of communications activity helps to ensure that our messages are getting to the right people, in the right places, at the right time. It also enables us to feed the views of our stakeholders back into our plans for customer interaction and plans for improved service delivery in line with the Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework. With this in mind, the strategy covers the following elements:

- **Where are we now?** *Communications audit*
- **Where do we want to be?** *Objectives and outcomes*
- **How will we get there?** *Approach, recommendations, internal and external*
- **Are we getting there/how did we do?** *Measurement and evaluation*

Good communications permeates every level of our business whether it is dialogue with government, dialogue with partners or dialogue with our communities – citizens, businesses, young people or visitors. Key to good communications is dialogue with each other, good internal communications which enable us to work towards our common goals, to identify our common aims and priorities and to agree the standards for our work. In this way we are all communicators and all have a responsibility to work towards *excellent* communications. To facilitate excellent communications, the communications strategy seeks to build on past achievements, identify areas for improvement and set new targets and outcomes in line with a changing environment and changing needs. Achieving this, particularly within the current economic climate will be a major challenge and effective systems, clear guidance, good standards, creativity and common sense are essential to our success.

Throughout this strategy we refer to the Council’s corporate identity and brand. The term *corporate identity* means the combination of color schemes, designs, words, and visual ways in which the Council is presented. The term *brand* means the overall experience that an organisation provides to its stakeholders. A brand reflects all that an organisation stands for – its overall persona.

2.0 Where are we now? – Communications audit

The communications audit is the product of a number of exercises carried out over 2008 and 2009. It incorporates a range of findings, including some excellent practice which can be built upon, some inconsistencies to be addressed and some gaps to be filled.

This strategy provides an overview of the findings and more detail can be found in the 2008-2009 communications audit documents. All outcomes from the communications audit have been used to inform this strategy and the objectives, recommendations and action plan include key actions to build on some of the strengths, address some of the inconsistencies and fill some of the gaps to ensure a robust, effective and user-friendly approach to communications throughout the Council.

How we were		How we want to be
Well managed	→	Well led
Hierarchical	→	Empowered and flexible
Profession centred	→	Customer focused
Consulting clients	→	Involving clients
Performance – an add on	→	Performance integrated
Operational focus	→	Strategic focus
Departmental loyalty	→	Corporate commitment
Reactive	→	Proactive
Challenged	→	Challenging

Current Situation

The 2008 Best Value and Community Planning follow up report outlined the fact that communication of the Council’s core values and objectives to stakeholders could be clearer. The Council has an ‘expressed’ vision, and is getting closer to achieving that vision through a move towards a Community Planning and Best Value ethos. The drive for culture change through the Council’s Process for Change programme and an increasing pace of change driven by changes within the Council’s leadership and management structures has also brought us closer to achieving the behavioural values.

Two of the key values are to involve customers rather than consult them and to become strategically driven rather than operationally driven. As we move to becoming a more strategically driven organisation, stakeholders need clarity as to what the overall vision and behavioural values are so that they are more able to buy into them and contribute to achieving them. (This point was also raised at the June Chief Officer and Senior Officer event 2009).

Corporate Identity

The Council's corporate identity is often used inconsistently (e.g. through signage and printed literature), and can sometimes include 'sub-branding' which can cause confusion amongst stakeholders about who provides the service. Sub-branding, or an inconsistent standard in the use of our corporate identity can also mean that we do not meet compliance with Disability Discrimination Act and/or Equality and Diversity regulations. This can hinder the Council in being accountable for the services it provides as customers are less aware when dealing with a service, that they are dealing with 'the Council'.

Recent research carried out by MORI on behalf of IDeA (see appendix one) suggests that although customers tend to be pleased with individual council 'services', they are often dissatisfied with councils as 'a body' due to a lack of understanding of what services a council provides – hence positive front line service delivery can end up being disassociated with the council and the public and media focus is often on the negatives. This can be one of the reasons why there is a gap between customer satisfaction and customer perception as it hinders customers in knowing exactly what to expect from the Council. This is sometimes the case in Argyll and Bute Council as many of its excellent services aren't always associated with the Council.

Addressing the Issues

A number of external inspection agencies have audited specific Council service areas and their findings have contributed to the evidence gathered for the communications audit. Some services have carried out self assessments in advance of external auditing bodies coming in and they have proactively tried to address any communications issues. This approach should be applauded and be seen as good practice for others to follow. Just a few of the many examples are outlined below:

- The 2007 Social Work Inspection Agency Performance Inspection Report made a number of recommendations for improvements in the way the social work services communicate with stakeholders and most of the points were addressed. A number of further suggestions for improvement were made in the 2008 follow through report. Consultation processes, as well as leaflet layout, web content and internal communications/information sharing within social work have been addressed.
- A self assessment carried out by the Council's Homeless Service (in advance of an inspection from the Scottish Housing Regulator) recently instigated an audit of the service and highlighted a number of areas for improvement in the way the service communicates. The findings suggested that the name of the service could be broadened as it no longer fully reflected the range of services available and the literature used by the service could be made more consistent to prevent confusion. The service is now addressing these points and proactively improving the way it communicates with stakeholders (in line with the Council's corporate identity).

Stakeholder Feedback and Involvement

The Council has scored consistently well above other local public bodies in Citizen's Panel surveys. A recent survey shows that the percentage of people who felt informed of services put the Council's standing at 61% (see appendix two). The Process for Change 'Customer Management' theme has provided the opportunity to scrutinise the way we present ourselves to, and engage with, customers and gathered feedback from the Citizen's Panel on how our customers prefer to hear about and access services. The project is currently conducting focus groups with a cross section of local people about how we communicate with them and the findings will be fed into the next stage of communications work (in the rollout of the action plan). The Public Performance Reporting (PPR) audit (in terms of

performance information) has also informed the communications action plan as well as a PPR framework that will sit alongside this strategy and the CPP's community engagement strategy. There are a range of direct examples of customer involvement including the work recently carried out in Helensburgh to get feedback on plans for the swimming pool refurbishment. This example shows how stakeholder feedback has been fed directly into service planning.

Our communication with employees was analysed by Strategic HR in 2006 when the section carried out an employee attitude survey which highlighted gaps in communication as one of the key issues. A significant minority of employees indicated during the survey that there were no regular meetings held within their section and a significant minority also identified poor communication from their manager, with a significant minority indicating that their input and suggestions were not in their view appreciated. This view of poor communications was in their opinion, demonstrated by the heavy reliance amongst Council employees to find out what was going on within the organisation on the grapevine. A further employee survey will be carried out before the end of 2009.

Achieving Best Value

There is currently little evidence available on how communications activity across the Council is planned and budgeted for and there are no specific cost codes for communications activities and so no central record of communications activity taking place (as some activity can be ad-hoc rather than integral to the Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework (PPMF)). This makes it difficult to assess whether or not we are achieving Best Value and to look at how resources could be better used. It also means that budget is not always spent appropriately on communications activity (e.g. not spending enough to make communications activity effective or spending too much unnecessarily on 'glossy' brochures where there are more cost effective ways to inform customers of services). This lack of information hinders the Council in assessing the effectiveness of communications campaigns as no cost-benefit analysis can be carried out where there is no clear record of what is spent on activity. Developing a tab within service plans for communications activity (using the same model as that used for community engagement) means that there will be a record of how much is spent each year on communications activity. The fact that there are currently no formal planning or budgeting processes for communications activity means that we may not be achieving sustainability in a number of areas (Agenda 22 Environmental Sustainability).

Some examples include:

- **Economic** - Ad-hoc spending (not linked to corporate priorities); Less return/results for money spent (e.g. less buying power); Poor value for money; Less chance of attraction of new business/contracts into the area due to poor reputation (not helped by lack of planned and budgeted communications activity)
- **Eco**- Unnecessary materials produced (not waste aware); Wrong (unsustainable) materials used; Less ethical procurement of communications services and products; Un-coordinated education/awareness raising of environmental issues; Not enough development of, and use of, the Council's website for online services
- **Socio** - Mixed public perception (not helped by lack of planned and budgeted communications activity); Low employee morale/lower productivity due to lack of pride in organisation (poor internal comms); Public less likely to benefit from Council services (if they aren't made aware of them); Mixed messages sent out through ad-hoc and uncoordinated communications = employee and customer confusion

3.0 Where do we want to be? – Objectives and outcomes

In order to build a modern and strong brand, it is important that our core values and objectives are embedded in the everyday functioning of the Council and that we continue to develop a sense of pride and trust amongst stakeholders through having a sense of ownership. Two-way communication is essential in achieving this.

Communications Objectives

In order to help us reach our vision and achieve our goals, within the next three years, we aim to work more strategically on communications and develop stronger integration between the Communications team, departments and partners to:

3.1 Support cultural change within the Council

Outcomes

- A) Committed, valued, empowered and motivated Councillors and employees
- B) Councillors and employees with pride in, and loyalty to, the Council with shared values and goals
- C) Councillors and employees committed to excellent customer service

3.2 Develop positive relationships amongst stakeholders

Outcomes

- A) Improved partnership working and information flow amongst partners
- B) Increased involvement of stakeholders in continuous improvement

3.3 Increase awareness of the Council's vision and services

Outcomes

- A) Stakeholders know what we do
- B) Stakeholders know what we're trying to achieve
- C) Stakeholders know how to contact us

3.4 Strengthen the Council's image and reputation

Outcomes

- A) The Council is associated with valued and excellent quality services
- B) Customer perception reflective of an accountable, open and honest Council

4.0 How will we get there? – Strategy

This strategy outlines the objectives we have set to improve our internal and external communications. There are a number of overlaps between what we are trying to achieve internally and what we are trying to achieve externally.

Approach

To achieve the communications objectives outlined in section three, a corporate and strategic approach to communication is needed (with commitment from services). Communication is everybody's responsibility and it is therefore helpful if we provide, and use effectively, tools, channels and mechanisms to enable and encourage positive communication across the Council. Employees have had the opportunity to feed into the review of current procedures through the Council's communications liaison group and this will be continued as an ongoing process of involvement, feedback and improvement.

The communications tab within service plans will enable us to effectively match communications activity with service and Council priorities and will therefore demonstrate a clear line of sight between the Council, Community and Government outcomes we are working to achieve. This approach will allow us to better record and monitor how much time and money is spent on communications activity and we can then set appropriate benchmarks and improve the effectiveness of our communications activity year on year.

Communications focus and resource will be aligned to Council priority areas from key actions identified in the Improvement Plan, the Corporate Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement and through the Council's change and improvement programme - Process for Change. In addition, the next stage of communications work will encourage stakeholders to give their views to feed into the development of a set of Council priorities- this is especially important in light of the economic situation facing the public sector over the next few years.

In order to ensure that our communications activities are aligned with Council priorities and that resources are being used appropriately, it is recommended that the communications strategy and communications budget/activity tabs within service plans are reviewed annually and that they are approved and signed off by the relevant DMT and the SMT before they go to the Executive as part of the Council's annual budgetary process. This will ensure that all communications activity is planned proactively and it will encourage a stronger adherence to communications policies. In addition, it will help us to improve the coordination of our communications activity and improve the consistency in the quality of information/material going out and the processes we follow in dealing with the information coming back in.

Key channels for communication from the Council to stakeholders will broadly be through PR, new media, marketing communications and events or face to face meetings/briefings (and by Video Conferencing where appropriate). The role of our Councillors in communicating with the public through their surgeries is also imperative. More detail on the communications channels is highlighted in the action plan.

All communications activity will be in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and will be accessible to all. In addition, copy will be written using plain language to ensure that information is presented in a way that is easy for stakeholders to understand.

Communications Recommendations

A series of high level recommendations are highlighted below and these address the key issues. They aim to put in place the appropriate structure and systems necessary to facilitate effective communications and they also inform the communications action plan (see appendix three). It is recommended:

- That a review of the operational structure of communications is undertaken (to ensure that the right structure is in place for successful delivery of all actions within the action plan)
- That a user-friendly communications toolkit is developed to promote a *quality* image of Argyll and Bute Council as the Leading Rural Area. This will include templates and much of the information found in the current design guide – to be available in bite size chunks; as well as a user-friendly, clear and accessible communications governance protocol to ensure that communications activity is easily monitored (to help protect the brand) and measured (to ensure that Best Value is achieved)

- That services are classed as 'customers' of the communications team through delivery of professional customer service in providing communications advice and support in an 'agency/consultancy' style and ensuring that communications policy is circulated around, and understood by, employees
- That a communications representative forms part of each major project team within the Council and that a consistent approach to project communications is rolled out across all projects
- That an assessment of the overall Council vision and values is undertaken (as part of the review of the Corporate Plan) to ensure that we are able to measure them and that key messages are then developed based on the agreed vision and values
- That each service develops a communications tab within the service planning template (in the same way that community engagement activity is outlined) as part of the Council's Service Planning and Planning and Performance Management Framework
- That the communications tabs within service plans are signed off by the relevant DMTs and SMT before going to the Executive - ensuring that activity highlighted for each service fits with corporate priorities and that there is no duplication, or contradictory communications activity planned across departments/projects
- That a budget is identified for communications activity in each service and that a method is agreed to identify spend on communications activities (in order to help establish whether or not Best Value is being achieved)
- That communication skills are highlighted as a core competence for all senior officers as part of the Senior Management Development Programme
- That the 'management and governance' of strategic internal communications is established and a high level working group is set up to develop the strategic direction of internal communications (especially in light of the Workforce Deployment project which brings the extra requirement for excellent communications within virtual teams, and the importance of technology in this through concepts such as "presence" and "unified communications")
- That the outcomes from research being carried out as part of the Customer Management project are considered in the roll out of the communications action plan (with particular reference to how the management of website content is addressed and how this is resourced)
- That an annual perception survey is carried out via the Citizen's Panel (in line with Public Performance Reporting action plan item)

Internal Communications

In order to get our message across to external audiences, we need to ensure that our employees have a good understanding of, and are committed to, what we are trying to achieve. We need to use internal communications channels which allow information to flow in all directions to ensure that our internal communications are inclusive and comprehensive. Engaging, targeted, interesting and relevant materials will encourage and motivate employees.

The action plan will help us to improve the regularity of communication so that employees know when to expect information, in what format and where to find it if they are looking for it. We also seek to improve feedback mechanisms to ensure that employee feedback is fed into service planning.

Each manager is responsible for communication and if two-way communication is promoted, consultation with front line employees becomes more effective. With the latter in mind, the PDR offers an excellent basis for promoting interpersonal communications that encourage real personal development. It also serves to improve service quality and delivery by integrating individual development with team, service and corporate development. The ongoing PDR training programme is an important element here and the PDR will be well promoted to aid the Council in achieving its current target of PDRs carried out for 80% of the employees we target for PDRs annually.

Effective communication with employees is also essential in managing change. By making employees an integral part of the change process and using conflicting views appropriately to feed into a balanced and realistic change programme, they are far more likely to buy into the process and make the changes successful as a committed and constructive workforce who feel a sense of ownership.

A primary tool for internal communication is the intranet and this will be developed as part of the rollout of the action plan. However, it is also essential that we provide information in an inclusive way and that employees who don't have access to electronic materials are still informed about Council initiatives and are still able to access information.

Every opportunity should be sought to ensure that where appropriate, successful internal stories are also promoted externally and this will help to strengthen the Council's reputation and image as a first choice employer in the area (in line with the Council's Growing Our Own strategy). It will also help to promote Argyll and Bute as the Leading Rural Area.

External Communications

The Council needs to establish a clear and realistic, measurable vision and set of values and promote these to stakeholders. A *quality* Argyll and Bute Council brand will provide the vehicle to promote these. The brand will be modern, friendly, professional, and easily recognisable at a glance through the appropriate use of key messages, visual presentation and the quality of services and customer service delivered by the Council. All services will be involved in the development of a set of brand guidelines through the relevant cross section of employees and the Communications Liaison Group and this will ensure that employees will buy into a consistent use of the guidelines to ensure that the Council is able to develop a strong brand.

The Council and its services should seek to promote excellent work through various industry awards to demonstrate best practice. In order for the Council to be seen as Scotland's Leading Rural Area – it is essential that we are 'award winning' in areas which are 'key' to our vision. (E.g. where positive communications activity is prevalent, we should seek to win industry awards such as the CIPR Pride Awards).

In addition, promoting ourselves as the Leading Rural Area is important in the development of the Argyll and Bute area brand and the Council will work closely with the Argyll and the Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership and members of the Food from Argyll Group to ensure that the communications activities of each organisation are supportive of one another.

The Council website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk has been, and is being, developed as a primary external communications tool. More specific detail will be highlighted within the emerging Web Strategy of which the current Process for Change review is part. It is important that the web and communications strategies address not only the transactional elements of the website but also the general content and promotional elements of how the Council's image and reputation are portrayed. Careful consideration should be given to the way in which the website is structured, edited and how content is managed. (By whom, with what resources and with the necessary commitment from each department). The work carried out on the protocols, governance and toolkit elements of the action plan (appendix three) will also address this.

All Scottish Public Authorities have a statutory duty to create and maintain a "Publication Scheme" (i.e. a "map" of all the types of information published by the organisation" - S 23, Freedom of Information(Scotland) Act 2002).

This Council, together with the majority of Scottish Local Authorities has adopted the "Model Scheme for Scottish Local Authorities" the structure of which is, like our website, based on the Scottish Navigation List. It is also accessible and compliant with a range of accessibility standards. Information provided includes details of the services we provide, the costs of, and the standards attained by those services. The scheme also provides details of the Information or analyses which form the basis of the decisions we make; and the publication of the reasons for the decisions we make. This ties elements of our communications and Public Performance Reporting Strategies together as our publication scheme will help us meet the outcome to have 'Customer perception reflective of an accountable, open and honest Council'. It also serves as a basis for compliance with the obligations for robust document management processes incumbent on the Council.

Public Performance Reporting is a fundamental part of external communications and involves changing the perception or awareness levels of the vision through ensuring that performance information is put in the context of what we are trying to achieve as a Council. The Council's Community Engagement Strategy will play a key part in ensuring that customers are involved in the Council's performance and service delivery improvement.

5.0 Are we getting there/how did we do? – Measurement and evaluation

Monitoring should be an integral part of our communications activity and the Council's PPMF will ensure that this is the case. It will also encourage the ongoing analysis of stakeholder views on how we communicate ensuring that we improve the way we communicate in line with these views. Robust measurement and evaluation will help us to carry out more effective and targeted communications activity year on year. The following methods should be used to monitor and evaluate the communications strategy and its effectiveness in meeting the objectives and outcomes outlined. Continuous review will also enable us to maintain current and relevant links into the Council's corporate priorities and increasingly importantly, the area's community planning priorities. Specific monitoring actions will be highlighted within the communications action plan to ensure that they are an integral part of our work.

- Continue developing the communications section within Pyramid in line with the Planning and Performance Management Framework and Public Performance Reporting

- Self Assessment through benchmarking internally and against partners and other councils – also through Public Service Improvement Framework and also with support from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Key ongoing measurement tools in all communication material such as 'calls to action' and relevant processes put in place for information received
- Ensuring that we measure outcomes not just outputs (e.g. there is no point in measuring how many media releases we put out if none get published or if the messages we're using aren't effective – we need to measure how stakeholder perception determines our reputation and how our messages are changing behaviour. We should also measure how well we're improving relations with stakeholders.)
- Communications/reputation indicators should be highlighted on the Council and CPP scorecards (in addition to the Customer Satisfaction measure)
- Overall feedback from internal and external stakeholders will be fundamentally important to the measurement and management of communications performance information. (The Citizen's Panel perception survey is key to this.)

6.0 Further Guidance

In order to take a 'one Council' approach to communications, this strategy and the forthcoming action plan should take account of a number of other frameworks to ensure that information and activity is not contradicted or duplicated yet joined up with other relevant activities being carried out by the Council and its partners. They should also adhere to external regulations, legislation and guidance.

Legislation and guidance

- Chartered Institute of Public Relations Code of Conduct
- Local Government in Scotland Act 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- Data Protection Act
- Children (Scotland) Act, 1995
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- W3C Accessibility Guidelines
- Public Service Improvement Framework

Links to supporting strategies and frameworks

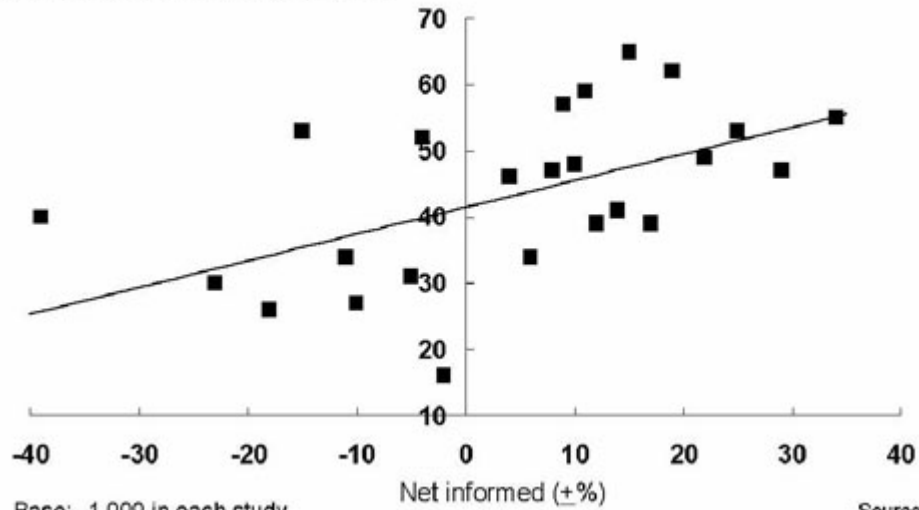
- Improvement Plan
- Planning and Performance Management Framework
- Community Engagement Strategy (and National Standards)
- Public Performance Reporting Strategy/Guidance/Toolkit
- Corporate Plan 2009-2012
- Single Outcome Agreement 2009-2012
- Service plans 2009-2012
- Process for Change Business Cases and Communications Plans (Customer Management for external and Workforce Deployment for internal)
- Argyll and Bute Council DRAFT Publication Scheme
- Gaelic Language Plan
- Single Equality and Diversity Scheme
- Customer Compliments/Complaints Policy
- DRAFT SOCITM Web Strategy

Appendices

Appendix One – MORI research on customer satisfaction with Council vs. Information Provided

Satisfaction with Council vs. Level of Information

Net satisfaction with Council (±%)



Base: 1,000 in each study

Source: MORI

Appendix Two – Citizen's Panel Survey Feedback on Information Provision from Council Services

Citizen's Panel Surveys: % of people who feel informed

	2006	2004	2001
Argyll and Bute Council	61%	67%	57%
Strathclyde Police	50%	58%	48%
NHS Board	27%	54%	36%
Calmac	47%	52%	44%

Appendix Three – 2009 – 2012 Strategic Communications Strategy Action Plan

Support cultural change within the Council							
Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of outcome/ links	Progress
SCS1A	Committed, valued, empowered and motivated Councillors and employees	Develop user-friendly communications toolkit (including templates/design guide etc – to be available in bite size chunks)	Consistent literature and reporting from all services resulting in an improved and stronger Council brand	Feb 10	Comms Manager	IP05 / IP15 / IP16 / IP17 / IP18	
SCS1B		Develop user-friendly, clear and accessible communications governance protocols	All employees aware of, and following, relevant media, design, photography, website CMS and reporting protocols	Feb 10	Comms Manager		
SCS1C		Develop the functional/resource element of the intranet to give Managers and employees the tools they need to do their jobs within the agreed protocols	Templates and service specific resources available to employees online	Feb 10	Comms Manager		
SCS1D		Promote the toolkits and protocols to all employees through a range of media and encourage their feedback	All employees aware of, and using, relevant toolkits and protocols	Feb 10	Comms Manager		
SCS1E		Develop a communications module into the Senior Managers' Development Programme and feed into the core competences	Suitable communications module developed and delivered	Apr 10	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		
SCS1F		Develop a communications module into the Member Development programme	Suitable communications module developed and delivered	Dec 09	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		
SCS1G		Develop and implement a programme of bulletins, blogs and updates from Chief Executive to target groups (departmental, Council-wide and Councillors)	Internal target groups well informed of Council developments and news	Dec 09	Comms Manager/ Chief Executive		

SCS1H		Continue to deliver programme of Chief and Senior Officer (COSO) meetings	Senior officers involved, informed and sharing experience and best practice.	3 x per year	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		
SCS2A	Councillors and employees with pride in, and loyalty to, the Council with shared values and goals	Carry out the employee survey and include questions around the Council's vision and values	65% response rate to survey with views on the vision and values included.	Dec 09	HR Manager Strategy	IP05 / IP16 / IP18	
SCS2B		Undertake workshop with Councillors and include questions around the Council's vision and values	85% response rate to survey with views on the vision and values included.	tbc	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR & Chief Executive		
SCS2C		Review and redesign the Council's vision and values in line with above feedback and in line with Corporate Plan review	Vision and values developed with Councillors and employees bought in to achieving them	Feb 10	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		
SCS2D		Develop the promotional element intranet to highlight and communicate the Council's vision and values	Positive intranet section helping to motivate employees	Mar 10	Comms Manager		
SCS2E		Secure future funding of Work4ce and continue to publish	Employees informed of latest Council news	Dec 09 and quarterly	Comms Manager		
SCS2F		Redesign the criteria and categories of the Council's Excellence Awards in line with revised vision and values in time for planning of next event in Nov10	New criteria and Excellence Awards guidance developed	tbc	Special Projects Officer		
SCS3A	Councillors and employees committed to excellent customer service	Communications team and services develop and agree annual operational/service-based communications plans in line with service planning process (via a tab within each service plan)	Proactive communication plan for each service	From Feb 10 - annually	Comms Manager	IP03 / IP05 / IP08 / IP10 / IP11 / IP12 / IP13 / IP15	
SCS3B		Communications team annual work plan developed from comms service plan and operational/service-based communications plans	Proactive communication plan for each service – linked where appropriate to topical themes calendar	From Mar 10 - annually	Comms Manager		

Develop positive relationships amongst stakeholders							
Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of outcome/ links	Progress
SCS4A	Improved partnership working and information flow amongst partners	Share Local Community Planning Group Work Plan information with appropriate partners	Joined up working and greater empathy between service deliverers with more customer focused service delivery	Nov 09 - Ongoing	Area Corporate Service Managers	IP04 / IP05 / IP07 / IP11 / IP13	
SCS4B		Develop database of partner organisations and use in conjunction with protocol for communicating with partners (part of toolkit)	Up to date database being used for information sharing	Oct 09	Senior Admin Officer – Improvement and HR		
SCS5A	Increased involvement of stakeholders in continuous improvement	Implement Community Engagement Strategy	Community engagement activities carried out and outcomes recorded	Ongoing	Community Engagement Co-ordinator	IP05 / IP11 / IP13 / IP16 / PPR4	
SCS5B		Implement Customer Compliments / Complaints Procedure	Procedure followed and constructive information fed into service delivery improvement	Ongoing	Governance and Risk Manager		
SCS5C		Implement revised staff suggestion scheme	Service improvements implemented by a range of employees	Oct 09	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		
SCS5D		Support Councillors in promoting their surgeries by ensuring Councillor profile information is up to date online	Up to date Councillor profiles online and regular attendance at Councillor surgeries	Ongoing	Head of Democratic Services and Governance		
SCS5E		Carry out a customer satisfaction and perception survey	Reporting of % satisfaction based on customer perception year on year and improvements tracked	Nov annually	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR		

Increase awareness of the Council's vision and services							
Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of outcome/ links	Progress
SCS6A	Stakeholders know what we do	Implement annual operational/service-based communications plans	Fully implemented plans at the end of each financial year and well informed customers	Mar10 - Ongoing	Heads of Service	IP05 IP08 / IP12 / IP13	
SCS6B		Follow new communications protocols and use agreed templates in communications toolkits	Improved awareness of the Council's service provision at first glance through consistent use of branding	Feb 10 - Ongoing	Heads of Service		
SCS7A	Stakeholders know what we're trying to achieve	Carry out campaigns in line with topical themes calendar and service-based communications plans	Stakeholders aware of the Council's vision through effective campaigns	Mar10 - Ongoing	Comms Manager	IP03 / IP05 IP08 / IP12 / IP13	
SCS7B		Develop and implement a programme of bulletins and updates from Council Leader to target groups (CPP and Citizens)	External and partner target groups well informed of Council developments and news	tbc	Comms Manager, Council Leader and CE		
SCS8A	Stakeholders know how to contact us	Implement Web Strategy ensuring the appropriate resource is available in services and protocol is followed to keep contact information up to date	Current and effective contact information online	Nov 09 (in line with Process for Change decision)	Head of Improvement & Strategic HR & Head of Democratic Services and Governance	IP05 IP08 / IP12 / IP13	
SCS8B		Implement Customer Management Detailed Design recommendations	Current and effective contact information available through Servicepoints	Nov 09 (in line with Process for Change	Head of Democratic Services and Governance		

Strengthen the Council's image and reputation							
Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of outcome/ links	Progress
SCS9A	The Council is associated with valued and excellent quality services	Develop and implement a proactive media calendar in line with service-based communications plans and topical themes calendar	Good level of positive coverage recorded in Solcara with customer perception improving	Mar 10	Comms Manager	IP03 / IP05 / IP11 / IP12 / IP13/ PPR1A/ PPR1B	
SCS9B		Celebrate successes through identifying a range of awards/encouraging services to apply for categories (including education)	Number of awards won annually	Mar 10	Heads of Service & Comms Manager		
SCS9C		Update and maintain PPR web pages	Easily accessible 'current' PPR information published online	Oct 09 and Ongoing	Policy and Strategy Manager		
SCS9D		Performance Scorecards transformed into customer friendly and engaging format and published online	Scorecards (Council, Service and CPP) available online and available in limited number hard copies. Check number of enquiries received in relation to these.	Quarterly from Oct 09	Policy and Strategy Manager		
SCS10A	Customer perception reflective of an accountable, open and honest Council	Develop and circulate Council Tax Leaflet	Every household informed of Council's key performance information	Jan annually	Comms Manager	IP03 / IP05 / IP11 / IP12 / IP13 / PPR1C / PPR1D / PPR4	
SCS10B		Develop and implement a series of media briefing events/meetings with Council Leader, Chief Executive, (and on occasion Directors and Spokespeople)	Programme implemented resulting in positive working relationships with local and regional media	Annually Feb 10 and Aug 10	Comms Manager		
SCS10C		Develop and circulate Corporate Annual Report (as per 'A new Direction')	Report published and made accessible online and hard copy by end Oct.	Oct annually	Policy and Strategy Manager		
SCS10D		Audited Annual Accounts (Following Accounting code of practice or Statement of Recommended Practice)	Annual Accounts available to public in July- audited accounts by end of Nov	July and Nov annually	Head of Strategic Finance		

SCS10E		Develop and circulate SOA annual report	Report published and made accessible by end Sept. Include call to action / record interest levels.	Sept annually	Policy and Strategy Manager		
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