

Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance and Julie Maddocks, Communications Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Policy and Resources Committee agreed a new Communication and Engagement Strategy for 2019-24. This report sets out the action plan for 2020-21 to deliver our strategic priorities and services.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To approve the Communication and Engagement Action Plan for 2020-21

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	7 July 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020

Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place 	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected 	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	<p>No specific legal implications are identified. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act Team Leader 1999 local authorities have a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Council's Strategic Plan and the Communication and Engagement Strategy demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty. The council is required to observe the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity; the action plan supports this. The Policy and Resources</p>	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS

	Committee are responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other committee or to Council as part of the policy framework. As such it is for the Policy and Resources Committee to approve the strategy.	
Privacy and Data Protection	The Communications team process data in accordance with the principles of data protection.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	The communications team supports activities to promote public health initiatives and campaigns.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The communications team will provide communication and engagement support to the community safety team.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	The communications team will act within the procurement guidelines.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Communication and Engagement Action Plan is driven by our Strategic Plan which sets out the Council's long-term aspirations for the whole borough and how they will be achieved. At the centre of the Strategic Plan is a vision to make Maidstone a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential. Communications plays a key role in achieving this. Through effective communications and engagement, we will support and deliver the four priorities contained within the Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 It is vital that the Council communicates and engages with a wide range of stakeholders including: residents, businesses, councillors, staff, charities and other public sector services. By providing efficient and effective engagement the Council can improve local understanding, perception, and involvement.
- 2.3 The communications team supports all service areas across the Council. **Appendix A** highlights services that the communications team have supported with campaigns, press releases, events and design work during 2019-20. The support includes the Business Terrace, Business Forum, Cobtree Park, Visit Maidstone, Housing, Community Protection, Waste Services and Recycling, COVID-19 response. The team have remained flexible and adaptable to ensure the Council can respond to new initiatives

and emergencies such as the recent pandemic and the flooding earlier this year.

- 2.4 The team over the past year have responded to over 480 local, national and trade enquiries compared to 271 in 2018-19, they have also issued 138 press releases in 2019-20 compared to 18 in 2018-19 a huge increase in reactive and proactive engagement. There has also been significant amounts of social media activity increasing the Council's reach across these channels. This has been achieved alongside a reduction in staffing to achieve a budget saving of £30,000.
- 2.5 The Communication and Engagement Action Plan at **Appendix B** sets out the planned work for the next year to support Council services and deliver the Council's priorities. This plan is a living document and will be updated as services identify actions and support needed throughout the year, not every activity can be planned for in advance.
- 2.6 The Action Plan for 2020-21 includes actions to promote a large range of services across a variety of channels. The work planned for 2020-21 shows how communications supports service delivery and includes the following:
- Markets
 - Clean Air for Schools
 - Waste and Recycling
 - Go Green Go Wild
 - Parking Services
 - Local Plan Review
 - Regeneration Projects
 - Lockmeadow
 - Consultations
- 2.7 Included at **Appendix C** is a separate COVID-19 recovery communications plan for information.
- 2.8 The Communications team also runs engagement activities and briefings for all staff including a weekly newsletter, one council events and we now use monthly webinars with the Chief Executive as more staff are working remotely. **Appendix D** sets out the staff internal engagement plan for information.
- 2.9 Councillors are engaged through the monthly member bulletin, regular briefings on strategic issues, committee meetings, forums and boards. Training and briefings will be made available online wherever possible.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Amend the Action Plan

- 3.1 The Committee could request that actions are removed/amended or additional actions are included. This will need to take into account the

capacity of the team, the expectations of council services and potential impact on services and key projects

Approve the Communications Action Plan

- 3.2 The Committee is asked to approve the action plan for 2020-21 to deliver the Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The action plan is recommended for approval as it has been developed following consultation with Heads of Service and unit managers with the aim to support service delivery. The plan provides a clear focus for the work of the communication and engagement team supporting council services to achieve their priorities.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The Communication and Engagement Strategy seeks to minimise and manage risks in relation to the Council's services and reputation. The associated risks are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the policy.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The action plan includes promotion and support for the council's consultations planned for 2020-21. Heads of Service have been consulted with regarding their planned need for communication support in 2020-21.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following approval, the plan will be implemented. Staff and Councillors have a role in amplifying the Council's messages and communicating and engaging with residents. To support this an internal engagement plan has been created for staff which includes the regular staff bulletin, briefings and events. Councillors are engaged through briefings, committees, boards and the regular member bulletins. Following approval of the plan the Member Communication Sounding Board will be convened to look at the Councillor role in communication and engagement as community leaders and as a key stakeholder.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Communications activity 2019-20
 - Appendix B: Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21
 - Appendix C: COVID-19 Recovery Communications Plan
 - Appendix D: Internal Staff Communications Plan 2020-21
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.