

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE**

Decision Made: 26 October 2022

#### **Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025**

##### **Issue for Decision**

To approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2022-25 and the Action Plan for 2022-23. The Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for and its approach to external communication and engagement. The Strategy is focussed on achieving Pride in Place with communications leading on a project to promote the Borough through events and promotion of the Town Centre over the next three years delivering the Local Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Strategy is also supported by an Action Plan to deliver Council priorities; the Plan is not exhaustive and is regularly updated to reflect the needs and priorities of services.

##### **Decision Made**

That the Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2022-25 and the Action Plan for 2022-23, attached at Appendix 1 to the report of the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance and the Communications Manager, be approved.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

The Communications and Engagement Strategy has been updated to reflect the emphasis on increasing Pride in Place and the proactive role communication and engagement plays in this.

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to delivering key Council messages, protecting and promoting the Council's reputation and establishing a strong and trusted brand.

The Strategy sets out the Council's approach to communication and engagement including which channels it uses and how it communicates and engages with local residents, stakeholders and businesses. Effective community engagement is essential to ensure the services the Council delivers are fit for the communities it serves. At other times the Council voluntarily and actively seeks out the views of the community to ensure that it is delivering high-quality, cost-effective services which meet the needs of its communities. An example of this is the Residents' Survey which helps the Council to understand the needs of everyone across the Borough and shape decisions and services required moving forward.

The Action Plan for 2022-23 sets out key campaigns and actions the Communications Team will be undertaking over this year to deliver the Strategy and the Council's priorities. The Action Plan does not contain every action and campaign undertaken by the Team; for example, the internal communication activities, Borough Insight or activities to support the Mayor and civic events. Included in the Plan are the strategic actions for each of the Council's priorities.

The Action Plan is a living document developed with the Executive and the Wider Leadership Team; as new projects are identified by services requiring communications support or delivery these will be added. Key activities for the Team this year include delivering the Pride in Place project submitted as part of the Local Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This includes a creative communities grant for local voluntary and community groups to bid for funding to deliver events, funding for a Christmas event and promotion of events and activities in the Town Centre.

The Team has responsibility for all internal and external messaging including through digital channels, social media platforms and working with the media. Core work for communications includes creating press releases and media statements to inform the public about initiatives and campaigns, branding, design and print for all signs, campaigns, events and Council initiatives as well as digital communications including video production. The Team actively seeks opportunities to engage with the media to share messages about the Council's services, achievements and events.

Over the past year the Team has:

- Issued 166 Press Releases
- Responded to 501 press enquires

This has led to

- 5,360 published articles
- Reach of 494 million

Across social media channels the Team has achieved:

- 27,931 followers
- 4,321,787 impressions
- 202,858 engagements

The Action Plan for this year focusses on the Council's priorities with activities and campaigns to support Thriving Place, Safe, Clean and Green, Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure and Homes and Communities. The Strategy and Plan focus on sharing positive stories and a positive image of the Borough to promote pride in place whilst supporting the Council's core work and services.

### **Consultation Results and Previous Committee Feedback**

The Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how the Communications Team will communicate the Council's priorities and strategic narrative which were heavily consulted on during 2018/19 as the new Strategic Plan was developed and then again when the Plan was updated in 2020. The Strategy includes an Action Plan setting out key campaigns to engage, communicate and consult with the public and key stakeholders across a range of services.

This issue was considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee on 11 October 2022 and the recommendation of the report was supported.

### **Alternatives Considered and Why Rejected**

To not approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. However, this would mean the new activities and actions to support the Council's priorities are not captured and an opportunity to clarify the Team's work aligned to the Council's priorities will be missed.

Agreeing the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan will ensure the Council has an up-to-date Strategy and appropriate Action Plan to support its strategic priorities. The Action Plan has been developed with the Executive and Leadership Team to support the delivery of the Council's four strategic priorities within service budgets.

### **Background Papers**

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leader of the Council – Councillor David Burton

Full details of the report for the decision and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#).

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm 4 November 2022**