

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
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

The report sets out the Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-24 and action plan for 2019-20. The strategy sets out the Council's approach to communication and engagement, our audiences, our key corporate messages and key actions planned for 2019-20.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-24 be approved

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	18 September 2019

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-24

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 <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the vision and priorities set out in the Strategic Plan.</p>	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 <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives by setting out actions to communicate, inform and engage with key audiences on our priorities.</p>	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.	Interim Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	No specific legal implications are identified. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act	Team Leader (Corporate

	<p>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 Policy and Resources Committee is 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 Communication and Engagement Strategy 2019-24.</p> <p>The council is required to observe the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity; the Strategy supports this.</p>	Governance), MKLS
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 A new Strategic Plan for 2019-24 was introduced earlier this year as a result a new Communications and Engagement Strategy has been produced for 2019-24. The purpose of the strategy is to support and share the vision for the Borough and support the delivery of the four priorities contained within the Strategic Plan.

2.2 The strategy aims to ensure there is a consistent approach to delivering key Council messages, protecting and promoting our reputation and establishing a strong and trusted brand. The strategy sets out that the Communications team will:

- Increase and grow social media communications to assist the fast and effective sharing of news and information
- Provide details of changes to service ensure the public are informed and kept up-to-date
- Monitor engagement and feedback to help improve services
- Continue to explore social media channels and technology to ensure it is used more efficiently and effectively

2.3 The team have responsibility for all internal and external messaging including through digital channels, social media platforms and working with the media. Core work includes creating press releases and media statements to inform the public about initiatives and campaigns. Seeking opportunities to engage with the media to share messages about the Council's services, achievements and events.

2.4 The Strategy sets out the key messages and actions for 2019-20 in the action plan towards the end of the strategy. The action plan does not contain every action and campaign undertaken by the team; for example the internal communication activities or activities to support the mayor and civic events. Included in the strategic document are the more strategic actions planned for each of our priorities:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place
- Safe, Clean and Green

2.5 Campaigns and actions over the last year included:

- Fly-tipping
- Recycling
- Crisis Comms – bad weather and emergency communications
- Park and Ride Changes
- Mote Park Adventure Zone
- Clean Air for Schools
- 365 days of good news
- 3 editions of Borough Insight

- Internal communications including 2 One Council Events, Well-being week and supporting HR initiatives
 - Electoral Registration and Election Communications Local and European
- 2.6 We have this year introduced a new service to measure the impact of the activity we undertake using the Kantar Precise Media service. When the action plan is updated next year, we will include statistics on audience reach and impact over the course of the plan.
- 2.7 The action plan for 2019-20 contains campaigns to support Council services and initiatives including:
- Housing Rough sleeper initiative
 - Homefinders
 - Housing First
 - Kent Innovation Centre
 - Maidstone East Station
 - Mote Park
 - Park and Ride
 - Museum
 - Making Maidstone More Active
 - Environment and Public Realm
 - Safety in the Borough
 - Go green go wild

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could choose not to agree the Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2019-24, this will mean the present strategy aligned to the old strategic plan remains in place with an out of date action plan.
- 3.2 The Committee can agree changes to the plan as it deems appropriate for example requesting additional actions or areas for focus, resource implications would need to be considered when agreeing changes to the plan.
- 3.3 Approve the new Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2019-24 at Appendix 1, to ensure we have an up to date strategy and appropriate action plan to support our new corporate vision and priorities.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 3.3 is recommended to ensure the council has an up to date action plan for communication and engagement activity. The action plan has been developed with Heads of Service to support the delivery of the council's four strategic priorities within service budgets.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy seeks to minimise and manage risks in relation to the council's reputation. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how we will communicate the council's priorities and strategic narrative which were heavily consulted on during 2018-19 as the new Strategic Plan was developed. 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.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following approval the Strategy will be made available on the Council's website and the actions will be implemented.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following document is to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-24
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None