COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2005-2007

Winchester City Council Corporate Communications

Introduction

The purpose of this Communication Strategy is to create the foundations which will help the Council present itself more proactively and consistently, and in particular build better relationships with stakeholders. Key stakeholders are identified as Members, staff, local media, residents and partners, the local business community and parishes.

This strategy was developed from the corporate communication strategy group (CCSG) which included representatives from all departments and the Leader of the Council, and an independent Communication Report.

Significant progress is already underway to improve two-way communication. In particular a new team briefing system has been introduced and a content management system for the Internet website has been implemented, and will be extended to the Intranet.

The Communication Strategy will comply with the requirement of the Government's Code of Practice in Publicity and will be reviewed annually.

Vision

All Council communication will be strategically planned and co-ordinated to ensure it is clear, concise and consistent, targeted at the specific needs of stakeholders, and is aligned to the Council's corporate values and priorities.
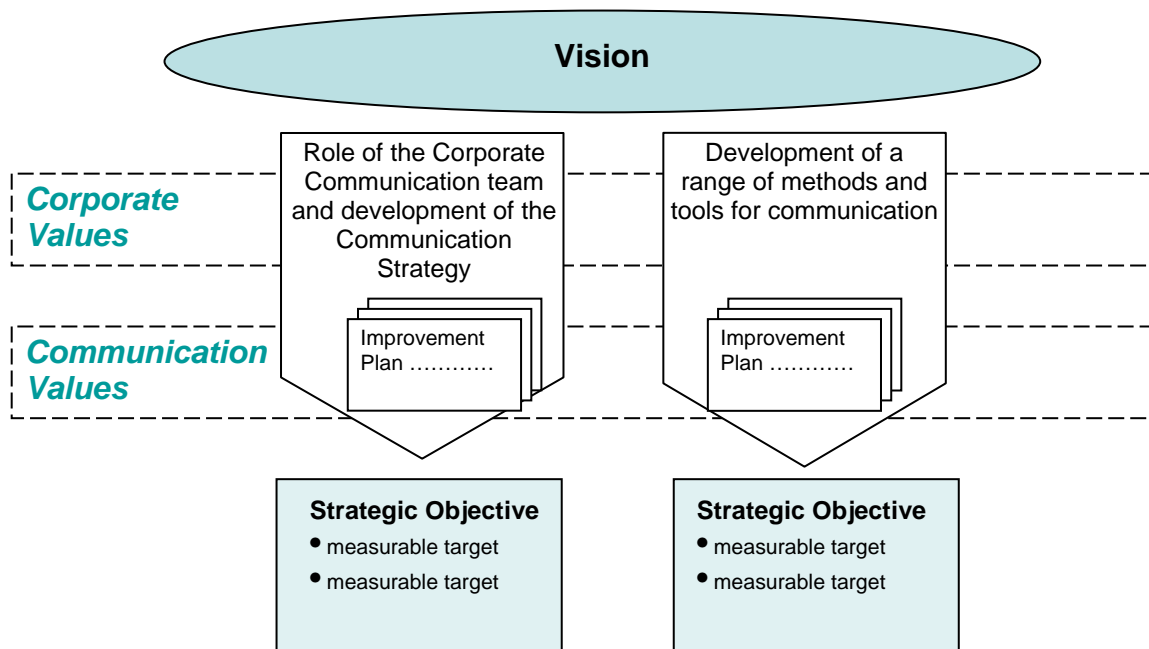
Communication values

The new Communication Strategy will support the corporate values outlined in the corporate strategy, and encourage four key communication values.

1. The reputation of the Council is created through all verbal and non-verbal communication, and all staff are responsible for how they behave and communicate in their every day work with stakeholders.

2. It is the responsibility of Corporate Communications to set standards of good practice and harmonise all forms of communication as effectively as possible to present a consistent and high quality image of the Council.

3. Effective communication is the responsibility of the communicator, both in giving the message and in ensuring it is directed at the appropriate target audience.

4. Communication is used to its full effect to give information and engage stakeholders from ethnic minority groups and those with a disability.

There are two main strands to the Communication Strategy

1. The role of Corporate Communication and the implementation of the Communication Strategy
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2. Development of a range of methods and tools for communication

These strands are underpinned by the Corporate and Communication values

The role of the Corporate Communications team and development of the Communication Strategy

The Corporate Communications team currently has a mainly advisory role, excluding its role with the Media where it is responsible for all media contact and acts as spokesperson for the Council. As a result of the advisory aspect, Communication officers spend a lot of time promoting good communication practice among staff, without the necessary authority to impose that best practice.

The lack of central responsibility and co-ordination for the majority of Council communication results in a fragmented and inconsistent approach, dependent on the culture, skills and priorities of each department.

It is recommended that Council communication becomes more centralised and the Corporate Communications team is made responsible for:

- Setting standards of good communication practice
- the corporate identity and house style
- communication channels including the direction, style and content of the Intranet and Internet
- approving plans for communication initiatives, including publications
- co-ordinating all consciously used forms of communication as effectively as possible to support the corporate objectives and desired image
- staff training in communications such as media interviews and press release writing

Within the Communications Strategy it is recommended that departments are still responsible for producing communication initiatives but should follow a planned approach.

Greater consideration will be given to:

- communicating the corporate values
- an open and involving corporate style
- tailoring communication to receivers' needs by gaining a better understanding of the audience and the right communication channel to reach them
- checking how the information is received
- feeding back how stakeholders' views have influenced policies
- sharing good practice across departments

Development of the Internet and Intranet websites

The internal *Intranet* is a vital tool for communicating timely and consistent information directly to Members and staff. The intranet has a great deal of useful information, but is substantially underdeveloped as a communication channel and is used mainly to access the telephone directory.

The external *Internet* is essentially a one-way 'top down', very useful information resource for all stakeholders, but fails to take advantage of the opportunity for two-way communication with targeted stakeholder groups. The benefit of this, as opposed to relying on the media, is that the Council has direct control over the message.

It is recommended that both the Internet and Intranet websites become more than information resources and are used interactively to gather stakeholders' opinions, communicate directly with different stakeholder groups, and build good relationships.

Both websites will have a warmer, more approachable style that reflects the values of the Council and leadership in the Community. There will be more interactive features, improved navigation and greater consideration for users needs in the online environment.

Examples of some of the improvements proposed are:

Internet
- New Editorial Home Page which prioritises and proactively promotes messages
- Membership access for key stakeholders with password access to targeted electronic newsletters, which will be produced regularly, depending on stakeholders' needs
- Discussion and Voting Forums
- An online newsroom.

Intranet
- Members should be able to continue to access their own area where specific and more confidential information is stored

- New Home staff page to replace City Voice. For example:
    - After logging in, the intranet will open with a front page which provides headlines of the current news of the day. Staff and Members would not be able to by-pass this and could access further information about issues relevant to them. This could include:
        - departmental news, eg major decisions from Cabinet and committee meetings, project developments, awards, new partnerships, media sensitive issues, staff changes.

- general information, eg one-off events, human resources issues, parking and office issues.

- opportunities for staff to be asked to vote confidentially on selected issues. This provides management with a regular gauge of staff views.

Smart targets

A Corporate Communication Group (CCG) has been set up to help drive the changes and maintain commitment within the departments. It will be responsible for drawing up separate, more detailed implementation plans for areas of the overall improvement plan.

Some of the areas to be considered:

Role of the Corporate Communications team

1. Awareness of the Corporate Communication role, responsibility and service to staff
2. The practice of using an approved communication plan for initiatives
3. The implementation of the approved corporate logo and house style on all communication and media

Development of the internet and intranet websites

A wide range of features can be assessed:
- interactive features
- the ability to monitor stakeholder opinions & encourage feedback
- improved navigation facilities
- password access for different stakeholder groups
- improved user response
- projected image of the Council
- improved knowledge of which of the internet and intranet sites are being used most, and utilising that knowledge to improve both sites

Improvement plan

The role of the Corporate Communications team and development of the Communication Strategy

Jan-June 2005

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
1	Review of total communication spend across departments	Use of communication resources	Directors and Heads of Service	Applying total communication spend more effectively	Corporate Communications Contained within existing budgets
2	Communicate the need for change, the planned changes and schedule. Explain the desired new values and behaviour Communicate the more centralised role of the Communication team and the implication for department staff	Understanding of the cultural change required and practical implications Improved balance of responsibility for communication between the Corporate Communication team and departments	Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service	All staff aware of Communication Strategy, and the reasoning behind it. Question as part of annual staff survey	Corporate Communications Detailed plan to be developed by CCG, including resource implications
3	Create an approved team of part-time Communicators (CCG), across departments	Help the planned changes happen and build support in Departments	Directors and Heads of Service	Team in place	Resources for membership of CCG within departments. Detailed plans for how CCG develops still to be determined
4	Recruit a PR person with full Institute of Public Relations membership	Central co-ordination and consistency to assist in implementing the Strategy	Human Resources Corporate Communications	Recruitment	Approx £25,000 Human Resources Corporate Communications

5	Establish a planning and approval process for communication initiatives and projects involving all media, including publications

Plans are approved by the Corporate Communication team | Earlier, deliberate and sustained approach to communications

Planning, coherence Coordination and consistency | Corporate Communications

Directors and Heads of Service | Process in place and seen to be working | Detailed plans to be developed by CCG

Corporate Communications to action plan within existing budgets |
| 6 | Establish a corporate identity logo standard for use in all media, across all departments and establish how it will be enforced & monitored | Visibility, scope and overall reputation | Corporate Communications

Design and Print | Issue corporate guidelines to departments and to external print and design studios that are used for Council activity | Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG

Implementation by Corporate Communication within existing budgets |
| 7 | Establish a house-style for Corporate addresses and contacts in the traditional and online environment | Consistency

Branding | CCG | House style implemented | Detailed plan to be developed by CCG |
| 8 | Develop a stakeholder map mapping views and communication needs of targeted stakeholders | Knowledge of stakeholders' image of Council and communication needs | Corporate Communications & CCG. Departments need to share their knowledge of stakeholders | Stakeholder map developed and available | Map to be developed by departments in consultation with CCG |

July-Dec 2005

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
1	Launch new planning and approval process for communication initiatives and projects involving all media, including publications	Earlier, deliberate and sustained approach to communications Planning, coherence Coordination and consistency	Corporate Communications	Processes written, implemented and being adhered to	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG Corporate Communication
2	Design 'how to' Guides for different communication needs and media, including publications	Illustrate good communication practice	Corporate Communications Design and Print	Guides designed and issued	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG
3	Design 'how to' Guide for structure & language in committee reports, and revise template	Committee report writing	Member representation Committee services Directors	Guide written and implemented	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG
4	Design internal communication best practice workshops	Identify & improve staff skills to deliver best practice.	Corporate Communications & Human Resources	Workshops arranged and held	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG and Human Resources (Training)
5	Review of publications covering how many and what they communicate	Reliance on publications - consider other media	CCG	Review completed and results published	CCG within existing budget
6	Share good practice, share & celebrate success	Share communication knowledge	CCG	Success stories published internally and externally	CCG within existing budget

Jan-June 2006

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
7	Run internal communication best practice workshops	Identify & improve staff skills to deliver best practice.	Corporate Communications & Human Resources	Workshop arranged and held	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG and Human Resources (Training)
8	Look for outside recognition of good communication practice	Value the benefit of following a strategic approach	Corporate Communications	Enter any relevant LGC or IPR excellence awards	Cost of entering any awards and staff time necessary to be detailed by CCG.

2: Improvement Plans

Development of a range of methods and tools for communication

Jan-June 2005

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
1	Write a communication strategy and brief for the Intranet and Internet	New vision, strong visual branding, improved interactivity and navigation	Corporate Communications	Strategy written and published	Detailed plans and cost to be developed by CCG
2	Communicate the vision of the Intranet and Internet website, and clarify the responsibility and authority of the Communication Office and IT	Extend the vision to create two-way communication channels which monitors opinions and builds relationships	Chief Executive	Staff aware of vision	Minimal staff time within existing budgets, but detailed plan and cost to be developed by CCG

3	Introduce a new management process for Content Management System.	Improved support for contributors. Learn from current practices in departments, and introduce a single contribution monitoring process across departments	Corporate Communications & CCG	Process introduced	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by CCG
4	Design 'how to' Guides for the online environment & communicate to department contributors	Contributors understanding of the needs of online users & their behaviour, and how to adapt communication	Corporate Communications	Guides published	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by CCG
5	Establish a new response system for e-mails. Automatic response with 24 hours & confirmation of when to expect a personal response	More efficient response to stakeholders	CCG and IT	Automatic response system introduced	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by IT and CCG
6	Establish regular reporting of website content analysis on the Internet & Intranet to Communication Office & contributors	Provide more meaningful content for specific user groups	CCG and IT	Information gathered and used to analyse website	IT and CCG
7	Develop the online telephone Directory with photographs & description	Knowledge of staff	CCG and IT	Photographs published of staff who agree	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by Human Resources and IT

8	Test & purchase publishing software to produce creative online newsletters with photographs	Effectiveness of newsletters in the online environment	IT & Corporate Communications	Newsletters published regularly	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by IT and CCG
9	Plan a new Internet Home page & establish & gain approval for the contribution process from the departments	Prioritise and proactively promote corporate messages with total control	Corporate Communications & CCG	Internet home page published	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by IT and CCG
10	Plan a brief to create a new Intranet Home page, which replaces City Voice.	Daily two-way news channel for staff & members, with greater user selection. Opportunities for user feedback	Corporate Communications	Brief written	Brief to be written by Corporate Communications and IT within existing budgets
11	Plan a number of online newsletters targeting stakeholders. Department officers are allocated responsibility for content depending on stakeholder interest	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	Corporate Communications & CCG	Newsletters are determined and plans put in place for publishing	Plan to be drawn up and implemented by CCG and Corporate Communications
12	Continue developing relationship with all media including trade publications aligned to departmental activity	Awareness of council activity and services	Corporate Communications	Measure of awareness and service offered through media survey	Corporate Communications within existing budgets
13	Review format and frequency of resident newspaper	More timely information to resident stakeholder group	Corporate Communications	Decision on residents publication	Project plan developed by CCG

July-Dec 2005

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
1	Launch Home page (Intranet website)	Two-way news channel for staff & members, with greater user selection. Opportunities for user feedback.	Corporate Communications & CCG	Home page published	IT and CCG within allocated IT budget
2	Launch Home page (internet website)	Prioritise and proactively promote corporate messages. Warmer, engaging design promoting the Council's role in the Community	Corporate Communications IT	Home page published	IT and CCG within allocated IT budget
3	Launch the first online newsletter such as for partners & members	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	CCG & IT	Newsletter published	IT and CCG within allocated IT budget
4	Set up an online quality photographic library accessible on the Intranet	Improve quality & relevance of images Greater sharing of resources	CCG & IT	Access to photographic library by staff	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and Print and Design
5	Plan interactive features on the Intranet & Internet website as suggested in the Communication Review	Encourage stakeholder involvement	Corporate Communications	Plan features such as news forum and discussion forums, news alert service and surveys	Resources within allocated IT budget
6	Plan improved navigation on the Internet & Intranet site	More intuitive access to information resulting in more satisfied users	Corporate Communications and IT	New features decided	CCG within existing budgets

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
7	Plan targeted areas for specific stakeholders on the Internet	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	Corporate Communications & IT section	Stakeholder area on internet	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG

Jan-June 2006

	Recommend	Improve	Responsible	Measurement	Resource
1	Plan an online newsroom as outlined in the Communication review	More proactive media communication with greater depth and richness	Corporate Communications	Newsroom available	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
2	Roll out additional targeted newsletters	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	CCG	Newsletters published	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
3	Introduce interactive features on the Intranet & Internet website as suggested in the Communication Review	Encourage stakeholder involvement	Corporate Communications & IT	Features such as feedback room introduced	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
4	Introduce improved navigation on the Internet & Intranet site	More intuitive access to information resulting in more satisfied users.	Corporate Communications & IT	Easier access to information for users	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
5	Introduce targeted areas for specific stakeholders on the Internet	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	Corporate Communications & IT	Launch specialist areas	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT

					IT

July-Dec 2006

	Recommend	**Improve**	**Responsible**	**Measurement**	**Resource**
1	Launch an online newsroom	More proactive media communication with greater depth and richness	Corporate Communications	Newsroom being accessed by media	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
2	Roll out additional targeted newsletters	Timely information targeted at the needs of specific stakeholders	CCG	Newsletters published	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
3	Roll out further interactive features on the Intranet & Internet website as suggested in the Communication Review	Encourage stakeholder involvement	Corporate Communications & IT	Introduce features such as news forum and discussion forums, news alert service and surveys	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT
4	Roll out improved navigation on the Internet & Intranet site	More intuitive access to information resulting in more satisfied users	Corporate Communications & IT	Improved navigation and easier access to information	Detailed plan and cost to be drawn up by CCG and IT