

Joint Scrutiny Committee Agenda



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Date: 7 November 2016
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A meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

will be held on Tuesday, 15 November 2016 at 6.30 pm

Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton OX14 4SB

Members of the Committee: Councillors

South

Richard Pullen (co chair)
David Dodds
Toby Newman
John Walsh
Ian White

Vale

Debby Hallett (co chair)
Alice Badcock
Mohinder Kainth
Ben Mabbett
Chris Palmer

Substitutes

South

Pat Dawe
Sue Lawson
Jeanette Matelot
Bill Service
Alan Thompson

Vale

Every political group may appoint all or some or its members who are not voting members to serve as substitute members, provided that they are not members of the Cabinet

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Margaret Reed, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

1. Notifications of substitutes and apologies for absence

To record the attendance of substitute members, if any, who have been authorised to attend in accordance with the provisions of standing order 17(1), with notification having been given to the proper officer before the start of the meeting and to receive apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting; and of any other relevant interests.

3. Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters, which the chair determines, should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances, which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

4. Statements, petitions, questions from the public relating to matters affecting the scrutiny committee

Any statements and/or petitions from the public under standing order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

REPORTS AND OTHER ITEMS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ITS CONSIDERATION

5. Communication Strategy

(Pages 3 - 27)

To consider the report of the head of corporate strategy (attached).

6. Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

(Pages 28 - 29)

To review the attached scrutiny work schedule. Please note, although the dates are confirmed, the items under consideration are subject to being withdrawn, added to or rearranged without further notice.

Exempt items

None

Joint Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy Clare Kingston

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Wards affected: All wards

Cabinet members responsible: Anna Badcock
(South) and Matthew Barber (Vale)

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matthew.barber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Joint Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 15 November 2016

Communication Strategy

Recommendation

To consider a joint communication strategy for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and provide comments on it, in particular concerning those elements requiring review of resources.

Purpose of Report

1. This is the first joint communication strategy for both councils. It sets out the structure, aims and objectives for communicating with our audiences, including helping to deliver the corporate plans, roles and responsibilities, our commitment to keeping customers and staff fully informed and encourages good practice internally and externally.
2. To seek the committee's views on the strategy including which elements they consider most useful and any other suggestions they would like included.

Strategic Objectives

3. The strategy contributes towards South's objective to provide services that reflect resident's needs and for the Vale towards running an efficient Council.

Background

4. In the last year we have jointly delivered a host of communications and campaigns using a mix of channels including; the councils' websites, press releases, publications and electronic newsletters, Twitter and YouTube.
5. We have also kept colleagues informed of important information, campaigns and activities via the Intranet, through the staff newsletters and via planned staff briefings. Regular newsletters are also issued to all councillors.
6. The councils are delivering a number of major milestones over the next 18 months/two years, including finalising Local Plans, launching delivery plans for Didcot Garden Town and Berinsfield, promoting two Enterprise Zones and new leisure centres in Didcot and Wantage, and securing a permanent council office location.
7. These are important issues for our residents and local businesses and other influencers, which will likely be debated by community groups and reported by the media. It is vital therefore that these stakeholders, including local residents continue to feel informed about the councils' business, understand the benefits of any changes we are making and are aware of the positive impact our services are having.
8. This communication strategy sets out how we are going to deliver our communications during the last quarter of 2016 and during 2017, including testing new social media activities and how these will be measured to evaluate their success.
9. The strategy, attached at appendix A, also includes a grid template which will set out the communication activities we will be focusing on over the coming year – it is a rolling document that will be regularly updated – working with heads of service and their teams. This will help us to align our work, package up news stories where possible and ensure we have integrated handling plans in place.
10. An Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed and is attached at appendix B.

Financial Implications

11. There are financial implications to two elements of the strategy, which are:
Providing a more active approach to media handling and monitoring coverage, and analysing and recording in-depth data from our campaigns. Depending on which mix of elements that are approved by cabinet as part of the strategy we will review the resources of the communications team.

Legal Implications

12. Legal Services have commented on the communication strategy and there are no legal implications.

Risks

13. It is important for us to continue to communicate with our audiences using all the channels available, including looking at ways of engaging people through low cost social media activities and signposting people to important information online wherever possible. If we fail to do so, we risk alienating younger and working age people and some older people, who mainly communicate through social media. However, we also recognise that some members of the public, particularly the older population will not have access to the internet or do not choose to use social media and so we must ensure they are also kept informed about important information using traditional methods.

Conclusion

14. The Joint Scrutiny Committee is asked to provide comments on the communication strategy attached at appendix A.

Background Papers

- Communication activity grid
- Equality Impact Assessment
- A slide presentation will be given at the meeting (not attached)

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils' Communication Strategy 2016 – 2017

Introduction

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils have been working in partnership since 2006. Delivering their services and communications jointly - helping to build sustainable communities for residents, businesses and workers across the regions.

The two councils are proactively communicating their policies and activities through the way they look, what they say, how they say it and how they present information.

What we have achieved so far

In just the last year we have jointly delivered a host of communications and campaigns, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner Election, the waste contamination campaigns and the £0.5m plus improvement works to Abbey Meadow. We have also issued over 160 press releases and regularly briefed stories and council messages to local and regional media, and on occasions, the national media.

And we have kept colleagues informed of the on-going high profile, five councils' project and promoted the annual staff awards.

These campaigns and activities have been delivered using a mix of channels including; the councils' websites, press releases, Outlook (a newspaper for South Oxfordshire residents), electronic newsletters, Twitter and YouTube.

Internally we are highlighting our activities to colleagues via the Intranet, through the staff newsletter Connect, In Focus (a bi weekly email for councillors, and copied to staff) and via planned face to face staff briefings with the chief executive and senior colleagues.

Looking ahead

But we know there is more to do. The councils are delivering a number of major milestones over the next 18 months/two years, including finalising Local Plans, launching delivery plans for Didcot Garden Town and Berinsfield, promoting two Enterprise Zones and new leisure centres in Didcot and Wantage, and securing a permanent council office location.

The local authorities could possibly become one unitary council over the coming years – and working closely with our colleagues from the other three districts, where possible and strengthening our relationships with local media will be key to ensuring our communication activities and messages are heard.

These are also important issues for our residents and local businesses and will likely be debated by community groups and reported by the media.

It is vital therefore that our customers, including residents and businesses across both districts, continue to feel informed about the councils' business, understand the

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benefits of any changes we are making and are aware of the positive impact our services are having.

We will do this by ensuring our campaigns and activities are innovative and integrated - communicating to all our customers and colleagues simultaneously - using the appropriate channels available to us. This may be in print, via our websites and the intranet, through the media, face to face, electronic newsletters and via social media platforms such as the councils' Twitter account (which currently has over 12,000 followers), YouTube and Facebook.

It is also important for our customers to know they are being listened to and our communications will be aligned with the councils' consultation strategy, where appropriate.

We particularly want to find new effective and low cost ways of engaging with our audiences via social media and to also understand better how customers will behave and interact with us via our social media platforms.

Take Facebook for example who tell us that: "People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them." Globally, there were 1.13 billion daily active Facebook users on average for June 2016 – the majority being mobile phone users.

We are therefore looking at how we can boost our social media activity by testing how our campaign messages and activities might be received by customers on Facebook, through targeted local Facebook posts.

These will likely be short bursts of low cost or no cost activities posted on Facebook over a few days or a week. We would measure reaction and engagement to see what works best. The insight gained will help us decide on the level and shape of our future Facebook activity and resourcing.

Alongside, we will also look at other social media opportunities, including growing our digital network and asking our partners and local businesses to endorse and re-tweet our Tweets and share our Facebook posts.

And we will look to deliver quality video content, that's accessible and showcases the very best of our services. Our videos will be hosted on YouTube and regularly promoted through the councils' websites, Twitter, Facebook, press releases and other communication activity. Videos and other content could also be used in official presentations.

Our campaign messages will be delivered to all our stakeholders at the right time using the traditional and digital channels available to us.

We will also work with heads of services to develop communication plans and activities specific to their areas - aligned with the councils' corporate plans.

And we will work closely with our partners leading on projects such as the Didcot Garden Town and the Berinsfield Community Investment project to help them

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develop clear communication plans and ensure announcements and communication activities are delivered to a high standard, are on message and timely.

In addition we will look at the benefits of developing a 'thought leadership' communication plan for the Chief Executive and senior leaders.

A thought leadership campaign would enable the councils to demonstrate the positive impact they are having on its services and communities. It will boost the council's reputation and help us to be recognised nationally, regionally and locally as being a great council with good services.

Councillors are also a critical link in the chain of communications - as they represent the views of their communities and the views and values of the councils to the public.

For our staff, we will look to improve knowledge of the council's services and boost engagement through a new internal communication campaign that recognises and champion's colleagues who are working behind the scenes to deliver important services, and who may not always get the recognition they deserve. This activity will complement the annual Staff Awards event, acting as trailers throughout the year and encouraging people to nominate colleagues. The internal campaign will feature on our new look intranet for staff, which is due to go live at the end of 2016.

For our councillors, we will continue to keep them updated through our fortnightly newsletter In Focus and work with teams across the councils to ensure new councillors are educated about the councils' services.

Our activities will be monitored and evaluated to make sure they are having the right impact. Our communications will be adjusted if need be to take our findings into account and we will always look to ensure value for money.

A new communication strategy for 2016 – 2017

The two councils are already aligned to ensure effective communications are being delivered across the districts – helping to improve customer satisfaction, strengthen relationships and counteract negative perceptions.

This is the first joint communication strategy for both councils, agreed by the chief executive and both leaders.

It sets out the structure, aims and objectives for communicating with its audiences, including helping to deliver the corporate plans, roles and responsibilities, our commitment to keeping customers and staff fully informed and encourages good practices internally and externally, such as supporting the councils Translation and Interpretation policy.

It also sets out how we are going to deliver our communications during the last quarter of 2016 and during 2017 and provides a grid template at **appendix A**, which will set out the communication activities we will be focusing on over the coming year, and a section on measuring outcomes. An equality impact report is at **appendix B**.

This is a rolling strategy, its plans and activities will be regularly updated.

Our vision

To provide a better understanding of what South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils are doing to improve services, continue to provide strong leadership and position the councils as influencers, locally, regionally and nationally.

Our aims

To achieve our communication objectives of informing and influencing our stakeholders and the wider world, we will:

- Work closely with the senior managers, cabinet and others to help them set a clear proactive communications agenda and drive it through the organisation
- Help colleagues see communications in a strategic context – where everything the council says and does matters
- Ensure all narratives, messages, images and content are clear, consistent, professional, aligned and timely and be totally accessible to the target audience from the outset, and wherever possible takes into account people who cannot access the internet
- All communication activities will be assessed by the communication team to ensure they reflect and promote the councils' vision, aims and objectives. Primarily this will be PR and marketing activities and corporate publications

Our objectives

- To inform stakeholders of our services and of the work we are doing to make South Oxfordshire and the Vale the best place to live, work and raise a family
- To influence perceptions of the councils, its services and the two districts as a whole

Our goals

In delivering our objectives we will achieve the following goals:

1. Deliver well executed and planned communications that reach all of our audiences across a range of channels, so they feel consulted and informed
2. Demonstrate the councils' leadership role by more targeted communications with residents, businesses, councillors, wider stakeholders and our staff – using both traditional and digital channels
3. Continued improvement of the councils' reputation and influence with all stakeholders

Our audiences

Understanding our audience is the key to delivering successful communications with impact. We will work with teams, including our consultation officer, to ensure we understand our audiences well. We will also continue to draw on customer and staff surveys to help inform and shape our future communication plans and activities.

The audience list is extensive, but includes the following groups.

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- Local residents, partners, councillors, staff, local/regional businesses, parish and town councils, local, regional, national and specialists media, wider stakeholders and other influencers such as councils across Great Britain, the Government, lobby groups and visitors.

External communications

Our external communications will be driven by the councils' corporate plans, its consultation strategy, where appropriate, and from surveys and feedback from residents, customers, councillors, partners and local businesses.

As well as using traditional routes to engage with customers, our communication activities will also signpost people to go online to access information about our services wherever possible.

Findings from Residents

The 2015 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Residents survey shows an increase in positive attitudes towards the councils, including a rise in the number of people who think both councils treat people fairly and provide value for money.

A good proportion of our residents obtained their information from the councils' websites, (South 47 per cent, Vale 51 per cent). Others chose traditional routes, such as Outlook (South) - 42 per cent, local/free papers - 39 per cent (South) and 34 per cent (Vale), and village/parish newsletters (South and Vale) 34 per cent.

Recycling is the most positive satisfaction for our customers, with a satisfaction rate of 89 per cent for both councils.

The survey also showed that 73 per cent of residents feel either very well or fairly well informed, with just five per cent saying they were not well informed at all.

Public Information

We will continue to put important council information into the public domain using both traditional and online channels. Our communications, campaigns and activities will always look for low cost options, driving people online wherever possible. But we must also recognise that some members of the public, particularly the older population will not have access to the intranet.

According to reports published by Ofcom in 2014 and 2015, over eight in ten (83 per cent) of adults now go online using any type of device in any location - nationally.

Nearly all 16-24s and 25-34s are now online (98 per cent), and there has been a nine percentage point increase in those aged 65+ ever going online (42 per cent vs. 33 per cent in 2012).

The total amount of time spent online among 16-24s in 2015 was around 27.6 hours per week, and 6.5 to 9 hours per week amongst 65+ year olds.

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We also need to factor in Southern Oxfordshire's ageing population. The long term prediction by the Office for National Statistics is that by 2037 the number of people aged 85+ living in South Oxfordshire is expected to reach 10,100, and 9,000 for the Vale of White Horse - almost three times the number in this age group in 2013. This growth is at a higher rate than the national average (+173% in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse vs +148% in England).

Our challenge is therefore, to ensure our communications are designed to engage all age groups, using a mix of traditional and digital communications – although it is worth noting that the working aged people of today – will take their digital skills with them into older age.

Work continues to ensure the councils' corporate publications are of high quality and offer value for money. Currently the Outlook publication has been one of the main sources of information for residents in the South and has a fairly high level of readership at 42 per cent.

There are currently three editions a year, but this will likely be reviewed towards to end of 2016.

We will also focus on the South News and Vale News, which is an electronic newsletter emailed to town and parish councillors and local publications, for inclusion in village and parish and town newsletters.

From September 2016, these newsletters have been designed with residents in mind and emailed out to households and town and parish councillors across the two districts. A campaign has already begun to encourage residents, of all ages, to sign up to the newsletters and we will continue to look for innovative ways to grow this network.

This approach will help to align how we communicate with residents in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, and as the network grows, it will provide quick and easy access to thousands of households and offer value for money.

The councils' websites consistently score high for customer satisfaction. Ten per cent of page visits are to planning webpages – the most visited area of our sites.

In the past 12 months South Oxfordshire's website received 5.8 million page views. There was a 400 per cent increase in views of the waste pages when our clear sacks campaign ran in September 2016.

The Vale of White Horse received 4.3 million page views in the past 12 months and there was a 1000 per cent increase in page views of the Abbey Meadow webpages when we announced the upgrades in July and August 2016.

Website usage is growing each year as our customers and stakeholders increasingly use our sites as a first point of call - often driven online through our campaigns and communication activities and through day to day interaction with our staff and our partner's staff.

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The 2015 residents' survey showed that 47 per cent of people in South Oxfordshire and 51 per cent in the Vale of White Horse access the councils' websites.

Our challenge therefore is to find ways to drive more and more customers online to access our services and information over the coming years, whilst still meeting the needs of people who cannot access the internet.

This is not entirely the responsibility of the communications team, but we can help to change the behaviours of customers by heavily promoting our websites and their offer through our campaigns and communication activities. We will also work with colleagues to help them identify innovative opportunities, such as the development of web applications to support our services.

Our websites must be easy to read and navigate, reflect the councils' branding, include the most up to date public information and be accessible to all. Its content must be in plain English, reflect the councils' corporate business plan and mirror our communication messages, campaigns, activities and images.

Looking ahead - our vision is for the councils to have one of the best local government websites in the country, with excellent customer experience and continued increased uptake. Work is already underway to update our current sites for both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils, with new-look websites going live in early 2017.

Media Relations

We want South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse councils to be recognised as leaders in delivering local government services and the voice of authority for important local and regional issues. That its reputation in delivering innovative and timely communications is second to none.

As councils we need to be across the news agenda and have strong relationships with the local and regional media and also specialist/trade press. We need to work with them proactively as well as position ourselves as reliable, communication professionals so they come to us for information about the work we do and know how we are supporting thousands of residents across the South and Vale districts.

With today's news stories reported instantly via social media channels, such as Twitter, Facebook and media websites, it's especially important we are on the front foot and able to respond to all types of issues and interactions – from delivering campaigns, counteracting negative coverage to producing strong, newsworthy content.

Looking ahead our communications team will therefore:

- Build stronger relationships with local and regional media – ensuring they are seen as the people to go to for credible, high quality, multi-channel content, statements and information about the councils' business and its services
- Proactively work with local and regional media (print, broadcast and online), to sell in the councils' announcements, positive news stories, case studies and

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campaigns. This will result in better, well executed coverage across the channels

- Seek to place articles, blogs, and story's into the specialist/trade and business press
- Be aware of the current news agenda and keep councillors and senior colleagues up to date on emerging news stories
- Evaluate news stories and announcements to understand the tone of media coverage, what is working well and what is not, adjusting our approach to achieve higher impact when we need to

A review of resources may be required in order to provide a more proactive approach to media handling, including delivering high quality content, and media monitoring.

Branding

A trusted brand is one that provides consistent messages to the public across its services.

Branding is also the main driver of public satisfaction. South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils brand has three core elements, the corporate identity (how we present information), how we behave and how we perform.

The councils have different logos - but they are united when it comes to delivering excellent customer services. They have already achieved customer service certifications for a number of services and are working towards achieving a full Customer Service Excellence Award.

Our challenge going forward is to ensure teams across the councils deliver consistent messages to its customers – that are clearly written in plain English and represent our style and branding guidelines.

During 2016/17, the communication team will update the councils branding style guides, taking into account the councils translation and interpretation policy and ensuring the guides are simple to use and accessible for all.

We will find innovative ways to promote the guides to colleagues, getting their buy in, so that everyone sees it as a must use resource.

Internal communications

We want South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District councils to be recognised as great employers – where staff are proud to work, feel a sense of belonging and feel good about the work they do.

Engagement is essential to building staff advocacy – where staff speak highly of the council and are proud to work for the organisation.

They act as our ambassadors in the community, informally and formally, helping to convey a positive impression of the councils.

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We are already engaging with colleagues through the intranet, Connect (the staff newsletter), In Focus (an email for councillors, copied to staff), and through ad hoc face to face briefings with the chief executive.

However, from November 2016 and throughout 2017, we will also develop and run a robust and engaging internal communication campaign aimed boosting staff engagement and improving their knowledge of the councils' work.

We will draw on the latest staff survey results and informal feedback to help shape the internal campaign.

The campaign will also recognise the work colleagues are doing through:

- Encouraging managers and colleagues to share accounts of how their team members are doing extraordinary work, or going the extra mile, to deliver the councils' services
- Publishing these accounts as stories and blogs on the intranet and internal newsletters and all staff emails
- Introducing/testing a new 'Have your Say' feature, where colleagues can email the communication team with their questions, with suitable responses published on the intranet
- Review our employee awards to make them more motivational for staff
- Maintaining regular face to face and intranet led briefings for staff with the chief executive and senior leaders to update colleagues on the councils business, listen to their views and address any concerns

It is also vital that all staff are aware of the councils' campaigns and activities and have access to the councils' narratives and lines to take when issues arise and to use in their presentations, speeches and events.

We will therefore ensure our external communication campaigns and activities are proactively promoted internally to colleagues as they go live, including publishing content on the intranet and disseminating messages through the operational management group.

Responsibilities

Everyone across the councils has a responsibility for communicating internally and externally. The communication team is the councils' professional lead on communications and can develop and execute communication plans and activities, but all staff and councillors are ambassadors for getting messages across to stakeholders.

In practice this means:

The management team will

- Be responsible for driving the Communication Strategy by applying its principles to their work
- Keep their cabinet member regularly informed of issues and developments

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- Take responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation of the Communication Strategy in their service area
- Provide regular feedback to the chief executive thus creating an upward flow of information

Operational management group will

- Communicate decisions at the right time and in the most appropriate way so information reaches all audiences
- Notify communications of any sensitive issues as soon as possible so they can prepare appropriate communications for media interest
- Ensure staff are aware of the Communication Strategy, and understand their part in delivering it
- Establish channels of communication to keep staff regularly informed of service and council wide news and give them opportunities to express their views and opinions on internal matters
- Seek professional advice from the communications team before agreeing to any communications
- Work closely with the communications team to identify projects that require stand-alone communication plans and work with the communications team to develop and execute these
- Keep stakeholders informed of service developments and issues

Councillors

Councillors are a critical link in the chain of communication with stakeholders because they represent the views of the public to the council and the views and values of the council to the public.

Roles for councillors in communicating and influencing on behalf of the council are important in fulfilling the councils' role as community leaders.

Support and professional communication advice will continue to be provided to councillors on how they can fulfil their ambassadorial role and demonstrate community leadership.

Communication team

The communication team is the central point of contact and lead for all communication activities.

The team will:

- Provide professional advice to staff on communicating news and information across the full spectrum of communication activities (media relations, marketing and PR, branding, new media etc.)
- Coordinate cross service/multi agency media relations and PR activities
- Produce core corporate publications (Outlook and Connect)
- Be strategic - working with colleagues across the councils to horizon scan, plan and deliver well executed and timely communication activities

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- Take on a leadership role - working closely with councillors and colleagues to identify communication risks and provide handling advice, drafting media lines to take and statements where appropriate
- Oversee/produce high quality, innovative images and videos that support our announcements and campaigns and reflect the whole community
- Ensure consistent communication with audiences by enforcing the councils current Style Guide

The communication manager has overall responsibility for coordinating, action and monitor the progress on implementing the strategy. This will be monitored by management team.

All staff

All staff have a responsibility to communicate effectively with their audiences by:

- Getting professional advice from the communications team before beginning any communications activity, such as launching new initiatives – including agreeing the timing, drafting content and designing images
- Ensuring communications sign off all communication material other than letters/emails to individuals or small groups of people
- Keeping their line manager regularly informed of service issues and achievements
- Ensuring content/activities are delivered with the councils style guides and translation and interpretations policy in mind
- Giving regular feedback on services, issues, policies and procedures – informally and formally. This may be through team meetings or face to face discussions with line managers and through staff surveys

Measuring and Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of the councils' communications will ensure our campaigns and activities are delivered with impact, reach the right audiences, at the right time, using the right channels, meet the councils' business objectives and offer value for money.

Our evaluation will be through:

- Feedback via customer and staff surveys
- The number of visits to content on our website for a particular campaign
- Positive, neutral and negative coverage in the local and regional press
- Analysing social media traffic and click through rates – where possible
- The number of visits to campaign/news content published on the intranet
- The number of residents who sign up to South and Vale newsletters
- Feedback from the chief executive's face to face staff briefings
- Campaign specific targets, such as the fall in contamination rates, and how many people sign up to our e-newsletter

It is important to note however, that obtaining, analysing and recording in-depth data from our campaigns and activities will be resource intensive.

South and Vale Forward Look Communications Planning Grid Sept 2016 – 2017

SODC Strategic objectives 2016-2020: 1. Invest in the district's future 2. Unlock the potential of Didcot 3. Homes and jobs for everyone 4. Build thriving communities 5. Services that reflect residents' needs 6. Be tough on enforcement		Vale of White Horse DC Strategic Objectives 2016 - 2020 1. Housing and infrastructure 2. Sustainable communities and wellbeing 3. Building an even stronger economy 4. Running an efficient council			
November 2016 Communication activities					
Bold = Main news (SX) (VX) = Objectives	Week 1 (1 Nov – 6 Nov)	Week 2 (7 – 13 Nov)	Week 3 (14 – 20 Nov)	Week 4 (21-27 Nov)	Week 5 (28 – 30 Nov)
South Oxfordshire District Council					
Vale of White Horse District Council					
Councillors and Internal comms					
Major milestone/activities/ Committees – consider media handling/comms support					
Activities where the date is yet to be confirmed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 					

December 2016 Communication activities					
Bold = Main news	Week 1 (1 - 4 Dec)	Week 2 (5 – 11 Dec)	Week 3 (12 – 18 Dec)	Week 4 (19 – 25 Dec)	Week 5 (26- 31)
South Oxfordshire District Council					
Vale of White Horse District Council					
Councillors and Internal comms					
Milestone/activities/ Committees					
Activities where the date is yet to be confirmed					
•					

January 2017 Communication activities					
Bold = Main news	Week 1 (2 -8 Jan)	Week 2 (9-15 Jan)	Week 3 (16-22 Jan)	Week 4 (23- 29 Jan)	Week 5 (30 Jan – 31)
South Oxfordshire District Council					
Vale of White Horse District Council					
Councillors and Internal comms					
Milestone/activities/ Committees					
Activities where the date is yet to be confirmed					
•					



Listening Learning Leading

Draft strategies/policies – Equality and human rights impact check

Draft strategy/policy being checked:

Is this draft strategy/policy:

- South only
- Vale only
- Joint across both councils

Service team: Corporate Strategy - Communications

Officer completing this: Patsy Cusworth

Once completed:

Date completed: 20/10/2016

Signed _ Patsy Cusworth __ (Officer)

Signed _____ Clare Kingston_____ (Head of Service)

Signed _ Cheryl Reeves __ (Cheryl Reeves, equalities officer)

PLEASE NOTE – THIS CHECK MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE YOUR DRAFT STRATEGY IS SUBMITTED TO MANAGEMENT TEAM AND COUNCILLORS FOR APPROVAL

Why do you need to do this Equality and human rights impact check?

Our strategies and policies set out the way we will deliver our services (including employment opportunities). When we are developing them, we need to check that they are not going to create any barriers which could prevent people from accessing our services.

People in Southern Oxfordshire may face barriers because of things like **disability, gender (including transgender, pregnancy and maternity), age, sexual orientation, rural isolation, income, religion/belief or ethnicity.**

As well as thinking about how our services will meet the needs of these groups of people, we also need to consider how our draft strategies and policies will help us to:

- promote positive relations within communities
- give everyone a voice
- respect and value everyone
- protect people's human rights

This equality and human rights impact check provides officers with a framework to help them work through these considerations in relation to their draft policy/strategy, ensuring that we are meeting our legal duties with regards to equality, diversity and human rights.

We have a statutory duty to carry out these assessments and they contribute towards our corporate priority to 'optimise access to services (Vale)/provide equality of access to our services' (South).

If you have any queries about this Check or would like some advice/support in completing it, please contact the Shared equalities officer (see contact details below).

Once you've completed this equality and human rights impact check, please send the paperwork to the shared equality officer, along with a copy of the draft strategy/policy.

Cheryl Reeves (equalities officer)
Email: cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk
Telephone: x2108

OUTLINE OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY / POLICY YOU ARE CHECKING:

1. What are the aims and objectives of this draft strategy/policy?

Our aims

To achieve our communication objectives of informing and influencing our stakeholders and the wider world, we will:

- Work closely with the senior managers, cabinet and others to help them set a clear proactive communications agenda and drive it through the organisation
- Help colleagues see communications in a strategic context – where everything the council says and does matters
- Ensure all narratives, messages, images and content are clear, consistent, professional, aligned and timely and be totally accessible to the target audience from the outset, and wherever possible takes into account people who cannot access the internet
- All communication activities will be assessed by the communication team to ensure they reflect and promote the councils' vision, aims and objectives. Primarily this will be PR and marketing activities and corporate publications

Our objectives

- To inform stakeholders of our services and of the work we are doing to make South Oxfordshire and the Vale the best place to live, work and raise a family
- To influence perceptions of the councils, its services and the two districts as a whole

2. Who is the proposed strategy or policy designed to support / help / serve?

The councils stakeholders, including, local residents, partners, councillors, staff, local/regional businesses, parish and town councils, local, regional, national and specialists media, wider stakeholders and other influencers such as councils across Great Britain, the Government, lobby groups and visitors.

3. If the draft strategy/policy relates to an existing council service/function, has an Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) already been completed on the service/function?

No

Yes – please list any issues/barriers identified within the assessment that your draft strategy needs to address:

A number of years ago an equality impact assessment was carried out on Outlook and Outpost, an e-magazine for communicating with local councillors, clerks and town and parish magazine editors. The communications strategy gives a broad overview of how we will communicate. Therefore actions contained in these assessments would not be appropriate to include as they are specific and relate to content and process of agreeing Outlook. The communications team and equalities officer will consider what is now relevant/appropriate.

4. Does the draft strategy or policy have the potential to cause a negative impact or discriminate against certain groups in the community?

- **If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you cannot justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.**
- **If 'No,' what existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? E.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they**
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people

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Equality group	Yes	No	Yes	No – explain why, including any good practice within the strategy that will meet the needs of different groups
People from ethnic minority groups		No		The strategy will help keep all stakeholders informed, including local residents and ethnic minority groups. We will consider any requests for interpretation into a specific language on an individual bases in accordance with our Translation and Interpretation Policy. The councils website includes google translate to assist people with limited English. Staff also have access to telephone interpreters.
People with disabilities (including carers)		No		We will work with local services to provide our communications in accessible formats, such as brail, large print, CD etc., on request in accordance with our Translation and Interpretation Policy. Text phone numbers are included on all council letters. Communication methods take account of people with visual impairments e.g. the website has the ability to enlarge the text, we consider tonal and colour contrast on the website and printed materials.

Equality group	Yes	No	Yes	No – explain why, including any good practice within the strategy that will meet the needs of different groups
Men or women <i>(including pregnant women, women on maternity and transgender people)</i>		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels, including in print via our own publications and other content, via parish and town newsletters, or via media reports and digitally. The strategy aims to encourage people to go online wherever possible, but also recognises that some people do not access the internet, so we will also provide other methods of communications as described above whenever possible.
Gay, lesbian or bisexual people		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels we do not believe a person's sexuality impacts upon their choice of channel. However we will consider when relevant the images we use to depict family life for example. Our aim is to choose images that represent the whole community.
People from different religions/beliefs <i>(including people without a religion/belief)</i>		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels, we do not believe a person's religion or belief impacts on their choice of channel. However we will consider when relevant the images we use. Our aim is to choose images that represent the whole community.
Older or younger people		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels, including in print via our own publications and other content, via parish and town newsletters, or via media reports and digitally. The strategy aims to encourage people to go online wherever possible, but also recognises that some people do not access the internet, so we will also provide traditional methods of communications as described above whenever possible.
People living in rural areas		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels, including in print via our own publication, via parish and town newsletters, or via media reports and digitally. The strategy aims to encourage people to go online whenever possible, but also recognises that some people do not access the internet (which could include the issues relating to broadband coverage in rural areas), so we will also provide traditional ways of communication as described above whenever possible.

Equality group	Yes	No	Yes	No – explain why, including any good practice within the strategy that will meet the needs of different groups
Local Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations		No		Our communications are accessible across a range of channels, including in print via our own publication, via parish and town newsletters, or via media reports and digitally. We do not believe the voluntary, community and faith sector will be disadvantaged in anyway. The strategy aims to encourage people to go online wherever possible, but also recognises that some people do not have access the internet

5. Have reasonable adjustments been made for people with disabilities to ensure they can use the draft strategy or policy? This might mean treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs

- No
- Yes - please provide detail:

Our communications are accessible across a range of channels. Text phone numbers are included on all council letters. Communication methods take account of people with visual impairments e.g. the website has the ability to enlarge the text, browse aloud enables people to listen to the website, and we consider tonal and colour contrast on the website and printed materials. Staff are required to use plain English. The draft strategy will not change this approach and will include our alternative format strapline.

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email and easy read. Please contact [service team] on  [telephone number]

6. Have there been any equality related recommendations in the area that your draft policy/strategy is covering which have arisen from, for example, internal/external audits or scrutiny reports?

Recommendation made	Is this being addressed in your draft strategy or policy? If not, please explain why.
No internal audits of this service	

7. Will the draft strategy or policy help to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it e.g., will the changes help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between the different groups

- No (*If you feel there is scope to improve how you foster good relations, amend your decision accordingly*)
- Yes – please explain how

The strategy has the potential to foster good relations through the style, images used and the content of communication. The communications team will ensure positive messages that help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between different groups are included when and where relevant.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

8. Will the draft strategy or policy have an impact on any relevant human rights [You may find it helpful to view the human rights guide for public authorities on the intranet to help you decide]. Please identify which human rights have been considered?

When the council is doing any form of communication we will consider if the content could impact on a person's human rights. The articles most relevant are:

Article 6 Right to a fair trial (for example, not disclosing personal or sensitive information during an investigation). Article 8 Right to respect for a private and family life
Article 10 Freedom of expression
Article 14 Prohibition of discrimination

What impact was identified?

Was the impact identified positive (fulfilling, protecting, promoting, respecting)

Please indicate the positive effect:

The strategy requires staff to get professional advice from the communications team before beginning any communications activity, such as launching new initiatives – including agreeing the timing, drafting content and designing images. This will help to protect and respect human rights.

Was the impact negative (removing, unjustifiably interfering with any human rights)?

If so, please indicate how the strategy / policy will be amended to reduce or eliminate any negative impact

N/A

9. Has there been consultation with relevant community groups to help inform this draft strategy or policy?

If not, please explain why:

No. However, we have used insight from local resident and staff surveys and ONS data to help shape the strategy.

If yes, please list who you have consulted:

Do you feel there are any groups that the draft strategy or policy significantly affects who you have not currently consulted? If yes, please contact the shared equality officer for advice (see page 2 for contact details).

10. Has the draft strategy or policy missed opportunities to advance equality of opportunity, positive attitudes and promote respect for human rights?

No

Yes – please outline the plans you have to address the missed opportunities (complete table below)

Action plan for mitigating action or advancing equality of opportunity and promoting respect for human rights

Action	Person responsible	Target completion date
Our aims – concerned that we are using the terminology ‘where possible’ takes into account people who cannot access the internet. This could result in teams saying it is not possible due to cost or that it is easier to communicate electronically without realising the implications of indirect discrimination.	Patsy Cusworth	25/10/2016
The draft Strategy doesn’t currently make reference to taking account of the councils Translation and Interpretation policy in order	Patsy Cusworth	25/10/2016

to meet specific communication needs, including people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities (including learning disabilities). Consider promoting/making reference to the policy within the strategy.		
When updating the Councils brand style guides ensure this takes account of the translation and interpretation policy.	Communications team	By 31 March 2017
Page 11 – all staff responsibility. Consider adding reference to also complying with the council’s translation and interpretation policy.	Patsy Cusworth	25/10/2016

Agenda Item 6

Schedule for Scrutiny Committees 2016/17

(further items to be added to schedule as required)

Meeting date and venue	Type and chair	Agenda items	Cabinet members	Head of Service
Thurs 24 Nov	Vale	Neighbourhood planning grant funding	Roger Cox	AD
		Local Plan Learning Points	Roger Cox	AD
		Local Plan Part 2 – public consultation	Roger Cox	AD
		Statement of Community Involvement	Roger Cox	AD
Tues 29 Nov	South	Burial Ground Future Capacity	Robert Simister	ADo
Thurs 26 Jan	Vale	Leisure Provision Strategy	Charlotte Dickson	CK
		Broadband connectivity	Matt Barber	ADo
		Commuted sums and affordable housing	Elaine Ware	GB
Tues 7 Feb	Vale	Review of Final Draft Budget	Robert Sharp	WJ
Thurs 9 Feb	South	Draft Local Plan	John Cotton	AD
		Broadband connectivity	John Cotton	WJ
		Review of Final Draft Budget	Jane Murphy	ADo
		Policy for individual councillors' grant decisions	Elizabeth Gillespie	CK
Thurs 9 Mar 17	Joint	Community Safety Partnership	Anna Badcock/Eric Batts	MR
Thurs 30 March	Vale	Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review	Robert Sharp	WJ
		Future Work Programme	All	All
Tues 4 April 17	South			

Item for future Scrutiny Committees (date to be determined)

Vale

Consultation (*may be Joint*)

S106 Supplementary Planning Document

South

Commuted sums and affordable housing

Joint

Temporary accommodation strategy

Unitary status

The Cabinet work programmes can be accessed via the following links:

South

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=121&RD=0>

Vale

<http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=507&RD=0>

Heads of Service

GB = Gerry Brough AD =Adrian Duffield ADo = Andrew Down
CK =Clare Kingston WJ =William Jacobs MR =Margaret Reed

Meeting Start times: Joint: 6:30; South: 6:30; Vale: 7.00