

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
AUGUST 4 2006

LGA Reputation Project

1.0 **Introduction and Report Summary**

1.1 The Reputation project is a joint I&DeA and LGA campaign aimed at bridging the chasm between the reputation of individual council services (positive) and the reputation of councils as a whole (negative).

1.2 It is based on MORI research which found people know little or nothing about their council. As a result an action plan has been developed, which according to MORI, will increase public confidence based on the drivers of public satisfaction.

1.3 The drivers are:

- Perceived quality of services overall
- Perceived value for money
- Media coverage
- Direct communications
- A clean, green and safe environment
- Positive experiences in contact with staff

1.4 The success of the Reputation project depends on consistency at a local and national level. Once signed up, Councils must commit to fulfil the requirements of the 12-point action plan, which focuses on the cleaner, safer, greener agenda and communications and have begun demonstrably working on the action plan within 12 months.

1.5 So far 196 councils have signed up to the project, including Cherwell and Oxford City councils.

1.6 While the Vale already meets some of the requirements partially or wholly there are still some adjustments to be made to meet the requirements of the plan.

1.7 A summary document produced by the LGA is attached at Appendix B.

1.8 The Contact Officer for this report is Nikki Malin, Head of Communications (01235 540376).

2.0 **Recommendation**

- (a) The Vale signs up to the Reputation campaign
- (b) The project is managed by the Head of Communications
- (c) The action plan is agreed and rolled out over the next two years (separate reports will be drafted for any budget implications)

3.0 **Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies**

This report supports the Council Vision and Priorities and does not contradict an existing policy.

3.0 **Why Do It?**

- 3.1 While there is no fiscal incentive to sign up to the campaign it offers an opportunity to enhance the reputation of Local Government in general and the Vale in particular by using a structured approach based on sound evidence.
- 3.2 Successful application of the project should help improve the Council's CPA rating.
- 3.3 The project will also act as a good basis for an updated communications strategy.

4.0 **What does it entail?**

The 12 point plan

Cleaner, Safer, Greener:

1. Branded cleansing operation: ensure a visible cleansing presence with a strong link to the Council
2. No gaps in cleansing and maintenance contracts: Integrate services and simplify boundaries eg to avoid grounds maintenance teams walking past litter because street cleaning will deal with it.
3. One number for public contact: ensure a single number contact to avoid people being passed around.
4. Deal with "grot spots": Know where they are and why in order to take preventative action. Areas which attract fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, graffiti etc.
5. Abandoned vehicles/fly-tipping: Set a target for their removal within 24 hours of being reported/sighted and make it easy for people to report it.
6. Green flag award: Aim to have one for at least one park, indicating it is clean, safe and green.
7. Educate and enforce: Make it clear to the public that littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping are crimes that will be subject to enforcement action and that offenders will be named and shamed.

Communications:

8. Manage the media: Develop a positive relationship with the media through a pro-active approach, honest evaluation and leadership from senior officers and members in order to better inform residents of the Council's actions and decisions.
9. Provide an A-Z guide: A good quality guide which explains the council's services in a simple, jargon-free way to help people understand the breadth of services offered.
10. Publish a regular newspaper: A good quality product which demonstrates an understanding of the readership and contains useful, compelling and entertaining content.
11. Council branding: Effective and consistent linkage of the council brand to community services.
12. Internal communications: Based on honest and open dialogue to help staff deliver better services, understand the council's goals and understand their customers' needs.

5 **What does the Vale need to do?**

- 5.1 Ongoing work already contributes to the 12-point plan, but formal adoption of the project would achieve a greater impact and formal evaluation. A detailed analysis is attached (appendix A).
- 5.2 While the attached analysis presents many action points, it is worth reiterating that some of the work is already underway.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

TIM SADLER
DIRECTOR

APPENDIX A

Core Action	What needs to happen and how	What has been done so far	What remains to be done	Cost/resource needed
Communications Manage the media	<p>The recruitment of the communications team should allow the requirements of the action plan to be met</p> <p>Develop a media relations strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting at least one positive story a week to the media • Having regular and open dialogue with the media • Introducing thorough evaluation processes for media coverage • Developing media guidelines for the Council to encourage a consistent approach and to help directorates identify what makes a good story • Media training for members and officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of proactive press releases issued • Building on relationships with the media through single point of contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting performance indicators for media coverage and evaluation • Developing media strategy as part of reviewed communications strategy • Setting up media training • Developing media guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media training would need budget support as it would be outsourced, costs would depend on numbers etc but roughly £300 per person. This could be met from the training budget • Developing strategies and guidelines will take place once the communications team is established. • Proper evaluation of media coverage would take at least one half day a week.
A-Z guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the services and include plain English explanations of those services without use of council jargon • Cross reference eg under rubbish refer to recycling etc • Identify if other partners want to participate and share costs eg police, County, NHS • Identify method eg through Vale Views or as a separate publication or through the Council Tax bill • Identify distribution method – door to door is best practice • Include a range of access points eg telephone, face-to- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress at this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As described 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing and distribution of a 32pp booklet to every household in the Vale would cost around £10,000 • Inclusion in Vale Views would cost up to £5,000 • Would be quite resource intensive and require a lot of time with one individual co-ordinating and editing.

<p>Council Newspaper</p>	<p>face, website, post</p> <p>It must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to read, jargon and acronym free and available in accessible formats • Compelling with arresting headlines and interesting features • Contain useful information like contacts and what's on • Politically neutral and objective • Well designed with quality photographs • Published at least four times a year • Entertaining with crosswords, competitions and columnists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The format and content have been improved for the last two editions with positive feedback from the readership • Investigating costs of providing an audio version for the visually impaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the format (the introduction of advertising will require a different format and increased pagination) • Involve readers more either through consultation or in the actual production • Increase the use of good quality photography • Review the frequency (Currently only issued three times a year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographer costs would be anything between £100 to £500 per job/day • Increase to four would cost £7,000 (however, there is a possibility of making the Council Tax leaflet a Vale Views "special" and therefore absorbing the extra costs that way – this would mean a change of timetable however). • NB the introduction of advertising will require a new format and layout and costs could increase/decrease as a result
<p>Branding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our understanding what people think about the council, their priorities and what they value – where we are now. • Focus on what we want to be known for – where we want to be • Ensure what we want to be known for and what we actually do tie up and can be demonstrated by staff and members • Conduct a visual audit of council buildings, uniforms and facilities • Ensure a consistent and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPI triennial general satisfaction, benefits and planning survey will give a good indication of people's perceptions of the council • Organisational development programme should answer the "where we want to be" question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of corporate identity including visual audit • Commission branding consultancy • Co-ordination of all literature and publications through a single point of contact within the comms team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would depend on how far we want to go. Eg new fresh start or phased introduction, but there would be consultancy fees to start with regardless.

	<p>corporate approach is adopted ie no "service area" independent identities, consistency and co-ordination in publications and literature</p> <p>Internal communications should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the process/policy/information means to employees, how it affects them and what they need to do • Be consistent eg explaining how individual projects fit into the bigger picture and help employees understand where the organisation is heading • Compete for attention and time by using flair and taking risks • Be two-way – using dialogue (briefings and discussions) not just monologue (emails, newsletters and front-loading) so you can understand employee concerns – though commitment to act on those concerns is paramount • Use feedback to continuously improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff attitude survey currently underway • Team Brief/DMT system provides a platform for dialogue but needs to be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internal communications strategy needs to be developed, based on the results of the survey • Internal communications products eg staff newsletters, intranet, notice-boards, should be the responsibility of the communications team • End the one-size-fits all approach (eg expecting a press release to tell staff what they need to know) and start producing tailor-made communications for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey will cost around £10,000
<p>Cleaner, Safer Greener</p>	<p>Actions and resources are a matter for Environmental Health and Procurement and Contract Management, however there is a heavy communications requirement, in particular the education and enforcement action, but on the whole each of the actions will require publicity and promotion which should be seamless with the other Reputation work, therefore any work must be done in conjunction with the communications officer</p>			
<p>Branded cleaning operation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a strongly branded cleaning unit • Clean vehicles and uniforms • Good and thorough service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street cleansing improvement plan is being introduced • Strong branding and uniforms in existence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementing the street cleansing improvement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources
<p>No gaps in cleaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate key services like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vale Voice Panel recently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better co-ordination within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing

<p>contracts</p>	<p>street cleaning and grounds maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify boundaries between authorities • Council-wide teams for key reactive services like graffiti, fly-tipping and -posting removal • Produce and publish service standards to set expectations and seek feedback on them • Include residents in monitoring • Review processes when calls come in • Use branding to spread the message ie publicise numbers on fleet vehicles • Train staff in key service areas so that the majority of calls can be dealt with at first point of contact • Ensure all staff are aware of the single access route • Use technology like mapping and customer relationship management systems to pinpoint recurring problem areas • Inform members of service levels • Need good intelligence and reporting systems to identify hotspots for use of mobile CCTV etc • Ensure contracts and schedules are designed to tackle grime quickly and effectively • Work with partners to identify 	<p>surveyed about satisfaction with street cleaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary litter pick scheme in existence but needs refreshing and further development 	<p>the Vale and with OCC needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve efficiency of Cleanaway Rapid Response Service • Set Service Standards • Development of voluntary litter picks 	<p>resources</p>
<p>One environmental telephone number</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSP2 meets a lot of the requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of telephone number on vehicles • Hot spot mapping needs to be developed 		
<p>Deal with “grot spots”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good use of mobile CCTV in partnership with OCC • Report it service available online countywide • Phone hotline under development (could be unnecessary if the national non-emergency number is developed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve intelligence and reporting systems • Need to improve internal communications about who to contact • Need greater and more sustained communication of activity 		

	<p>problem areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a public hotline • Publicise success 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract review is due 	
Abandoned vehicles/flytipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve and simplify reporting process through a variety of routes eg website, telephone, email and out of hours option • Promote surrender of unwanted vehicles – preferably at little or no cost • Provide opportunities for people to dispose of large items easily • Be prepared to move illegal vehicles • Publicise the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a good record for moving illegal vehicles quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting process is fair but needs improvement • Need to promote vehicle recovery scheme and bulky waste collection • Need to promote the work more and use branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources
Parks and Open Spaces- Green Flag Award (similar to the Blue Flag for beaches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the award scheme as a management tool for green spaces and parks • Conduct a visual audit • Involve the community by finding out the key problems • Work with partners • Promote your success once you get a Green Flag Award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual audit of parks has started • Vale Voice Five (fieldwork in July) will focus on parks and open spaces • Already work closely with community safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to work towards achieving Green Flag status for at least one park or open space 	
Educate and enforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs commitment from Members and senior officers for enforcement work • Create a targeted campaign • Link the crime and the punishment • Be prepared to name and shame • Adopt a zero tolerance approach. Once education and awareness programme has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already have the support of Members and senior officers • Ongoing publicity for enforcement cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to develop communications and marketing campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing/Communications campaign will need funding

	been introduced do not give a second chance.			
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