Nottinghamshire County Council

## REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

## COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY 2012-14

## Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the draft Communications and Marketing Strategy 2012-14 (Appendix A) and associated media protocol.

2. To seek approval for a revision to the Communications and Marketing staffing structure (Appendix B) that has been revised to deliver the strategy.

## Information and Advice

3. Communications and Marketing became a centralised, strategic service in April 2011. A number of benefits were realised in the first year, including:

   - **A high quality, One Council approach** to communications and marketing – through consistent advice, standardisation of practices and implementation of control measures.
   - **Better value for money** – marketing spend has reduced from £1.3m to £385k; efficiencies have been realised through an audience-focused approach; savings have been made through expert advice on most effective methods.
   - **Improved outcomes** – Gold award for media relations and a Highly Commended award for place branding at the LG Communications Reputation Awards in May 2012. These awards are viewed as the benchmark of local government communications excellence.
   - Some of the **key results** achieved in 2011-12 are:
     o Annual media coverage doubled to 4,161 items with the percentage of positive or neutral stories increasing from 78% to 85%
     o Improvements to the Council website resulted in a 60% year-on-year increase in visitor numbers
     o Public satisfaction with the Council increased to 47%, measured through the Citizen's Panel (previously it was 40% in the 2008 Place Survey)
     o Successful marketing campaigns achieving specific business objectives (e.g. visitor numbers, behaviour change, service take-up, awareness)
     o An updated corporate identity which is increasing recognition of council services and events (e.g. 86% of visitors to the Diamond Jubilee Beacon event knew it was organised by the County Council)

- o Improved engagement with residents through social media – there are now over 6,000 followers of the Council Twitter compared to 1,700 just over a year ago
- o The Corporate Print Strategy has reduced back office expenditure by £383,000 with total savings of £1.5m targeted by 2014/15

4.  One year on, Communications and Marketing has been reviewed by the Director of Communications and Marketing with his Group Managers. This has identified opportunities for further development that will allow the service to respond to environmental changes and public sector challenges.

5.  The Communications and Marketing strategy 2012-14 builds on what has already been accomplished, sets clear objectives of what will be achieved in the period to March 2014. This will be underpinned by a revised service offer that offers greater clarity to the organisation along with a series of delivery plans.

6.  The overall aim is to: ***"Develop consistently excellent, innovative and effective communications and marketing, to improve satisfaction with services and the quality of life of people in Nottinghamshire and the reputation of the Council."***

7.  The key features of the strategy include the need to:

- • Improve satisfaction with the Council through improved information provision and higher value for money perceptions
- • Make savings and generate income (whether directly or by supporting services)
- • Continue to develop communications channels (in particular the use of social media)
- • Encourage channel shift to more cost-effective and efficient online transactions

8.  The strategy is supported by a number of key documents, including the Corporate Identity Policy and the Advertising & Sponsorship Policy which was approved by Members at Policy Committee on 18 July 2012.

9.  The Media Relations Protocol (an appendix to the strategy) has been developed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the media team.

## Staffing structure

10. The staffing structure of communications and marketing has been reviewed to see if it is best placed to deliver the strategy. As a result of this review, a number of changes have been proposed to the structure (Appendix B).

11. In addition, it is proposed to establish an additional permanent Senior Media officer Post (Hay Grade C).  This resource is currently partly funded as a dedicated resource to provide communications support for the Local Improvement Scheme. This would deliver an additional saving of approximately £10,760 per year for the authority as the resource is currently provided through an agency

which is not cost effective in the longer term. The post would be managed by the Group Manager, Media Relations and would be subject to normal vacancy protocols.

12. A review of the Translation and Interpretation Service has taken place that has recommended that the service is delivered by Nottingham City Council. This recommendation is in a separate paper also on the agenda for approval.

13. The overall number of staff in the proposed Communications and Marketing structure would see a reduction of 2 FTEs with a consequent reduction in the cost of the structure. This makes the assumption that Policy Committee approves the change to the Translation and Interpretation Service.

**Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

14. To achieve a strategic approach to Communications and Marketing activity to meet organisational needs in the period to March 2014.

**Other Options Considered**

15. Communications and marketing staff were consulted with as part of the development of the strategy and associated staffing structure. This resulted in a number of changes to the proposal.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

1)	Approves the Communications and Marketing Strategy 2012-2014 and the associated	Media Protocol.

2)	Approves the revised Communications and Marketing team structure

**Councillor Kay Cutts**
**The Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Martin Done.**

**Financial Comments (MB 23/08/12)**
The cost of the revised structure can be met from the budget for Communications and Marketing, which is £2.367m in 2012/13.

**Constitutional Comments (SLB 28/08/2012)**
Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report; it is responsible for the Council's communications policy and its implementation. The Committee can authorise changes to staffing structure, subject to Human Resources comments and consultation with the recognised trade unions.

**Human Resources Implications (GME 28/08/12)**
The proposed changes to the structure of the Communications and Marketing team are linked to the review of the Translation and Interpretation Service. Dependent on the decision taken on that review, the possibility exists for some posts to be deleted, with some new posts to be established. The revised structure for Communications and Marketing complies with the county council's organisation design principles. Consultation with the Communications and Marketing team has been ongoing since June and various tools including face to face discussion and the use of the Communications Loop have been used to ensure the fullest engagement with the process. A meeting with the recognised trade unions took place as part of the PPCS JCNP on 13th June 2012 and further updates have been provided on a regular basis since then.

**Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Corporate Identity Policy (January 2012)
- Advertising and Sponsorship Policy (July 2012)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All

**Appendix 1 – Communications and Marketing Strategy**

# COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING STRATEGY 2012-14

## 1. Context

In April 2011, communications and marketing at Nottinghamshire County Council was centralised and a new approach was taken that meant decisions on how resources were allocated were based on strategic priorities set by elected members rather than available budget.

This has delivered significant benefits in a relatively short space of time, including the standardisation of marketing and communications, a consistently professional-level delivery, demonstrably improved outcomes along with substantial savings.

This has been reflected in the team winning a gold award for media relations and a Highly Commended award for place branding at the LGcommunications Reputation Awards in May 2012. These annual awards are the benchmark of local government communications excellence.

This two-year strategy sets clear objectives of what will be achieved in the period to September 2014. It identifies opportunities for further development and acknowledges the challenges that need to be addressed in a changing public sector environment.

The intention is to develop a communications and marketing function which operates strategically, is a trusted source of expertise, uses supportive challenge and insight to enable the wider organisation to improve, and is clear about its role and purpose.

In compiling this strategy, a full analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Communications and Marketing function was undertaken that identified ways to mitigate against any risks.

## 2. Aim and Principles

The overall aim of this strategy is to:

*"Develop consistently excellent, innovative and effective communications and marketing, to improve satisfaction with services, the quality of life of people in Nottinghamshire and the reputation of the Council."*

It underlines the Council's commitment to providing high quality, planned and consistent communications.

This emphasises the contribution of good communications to the wider success and development of the entire organisation.

All work to achieve it will be under-pinned by the following core principles:

- Activity centred on audiences

- An emphasis on quality, high performance and best practice
- Delivering best value through the achievement of savings, income generation and return on investment
- Continuous improvement
- Evidenced-based approach with activity based on research, objective setting and clear evaluation measures
- A "One Team" approach to make best use of available expertise
- Reducing carbon output and protecting the environment
- Working with partners whenever appropriate

## 3. Priorities and Objectives

All communications and marketing activity is aligned to the Council's five corporate objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010-14 which was approved by elected Members.

The strategy recognises the fact that good communication is the responsibility of everyone employed by the Council. This is reflected in the measurable objectives below which have been based on trend analysis from national and local data, as well as benchmarking against other comparable local authorities:

- **Increase the number of people who feel informed** – target of 59% set for 2012-13. The figure in the Place Survey (2008) was 43%
- **Improve satisfaction with the way the Council runs things** - achieve 47% during 2012-13. The Place Survey (2008) measure was 40%
- **Increase the number of people who feel the Council provides value for money** – target of 32% set for 2012-13. The Place Survey (2008) measure was 29% and a recent Citizens' Panel survey (November 2011) was 25%

These objectives form the cornerstones against which the whole Council communication strategy will be evaluated and these sit alongside some service specific evaluation measures (see section 5).

The key service priorities identified in this strategy are:

- Continue to **manage the Council's reputation**
- Deliver **audience-focused communications**
- **Generate income** where appropriate (and support services to do this)
- Maximise the effectiveness of **digital and social media,** including increasing the emphasis on channel shift
- Improve **public engagement and involvement**
- **Consolidate consultation and engagement** so council activity is driven by meaningful customer insight
- Further develop and increase visibility of the **Council's brand**
- Continue to deliver **effective communications channels** (new and existing)
- Improve **employee information and engagement**
- Help reduce the Council's **carbon footprint**
- Continue to develop communications and marketing **skills and expertise**

## 4. How the strategy will be delivered

### 4.1 Audiences

Audience insight is critical to improving the effectiveness of communications and marketing. An audience-based approach will increase the relevance of information. The Council's **core audiences** are drawn from seven groupings:
- Older people
- Adults
- Parents and children
- Young people
- Businesses
- Internal (staff, councillors and partner organisations)
- Visitors to the county

All activity will be tailored to ensure it is appropriate and targeted. In particular, opportunities will be sought to reach individual audiences on multiple issues simultaneously (the Council's What's On guide is an example of this).

While it is possible for individuals to be in several audiences at once, their relevance to a particular campaign will be dictated by their personal interest for that issue (for example, as a council employee, a parent or someone active in business).

The Council also has a number of internal and external **key stakeholders**: Elected members, managers, council employees, trade unions, service users, Nottinghamshire residents, visitors to the county, the media, Business community, Partners, key influencers – MPs, district leaders and CEOs, Chief Constable etc.

### 4.2 Key messages
The corporate key messages support the Council's values (see Diagram 1). The messages are supported by the themes in the Strategic Plan 2012-14 and can be distilled into focused communications with our different audiences.

**Diagram 1: Corporate Key Messages**

### 4.3 Future development

### 4.3.1 Digital and channel shift

As well as enhancing existing communication channels, there is the opportunity to develop new ones that will enable the public to engage with the council in a variety of new ways. This will be needed to deliver the objectives of this strategy.

In particular, digital technology offers many new opportunities, including the movement of transactions and payments online and the ability to engage with communities through a variety of social media channels. Digital methods have a number of advantages, including: lower cost, more efficient, environmentally-friendly, 24-hour access, ability for feedback and greater reach potential.

Communications and Marketing intends to lead the way in the digital field. Facebook and Twitter have already been used to good effect with a rapidly growing user base. However, social networks also bring challenges. They can be time-intensive and offer a platform for unsolicited negative content. Therefore, an expansion of their use will be done carefully, supported by the correct policies to be approved by Members.

### 4.3.2 Marketing

Targeted marketing campaigns will continue to be delivered to directly support business objectives, which may include awareness raising, service take-up, behaviour change or achieving savings/income targets. The cross-marketing of services will be further developed through a continued audience approach and increasing integration of communications and marketing channels.

### 4.3.3 Income generation

There are a range of opportunities to secure better value for money for the Council and generate income through a variety of means. These include the graphics and print service, advertising and sold services to schools.

Communications and Marketing is taking a strategic approach to reviewing the potential for generating income and analysing the resources needed. Any new opportunities for income generation will be presented to Councillors for approval.

The team also leads specific projects and campaigns which directly support services to generate income and make savings.

### 4.3.4 Corporate identity

The Council implemented an updated corporate identity and gained control over how it was used, when members approved the Corporate Identity Policy in January 2012.

The Council's corporate identity (brand) will be further standardised and developed in the period ahead. This is about more than just our visual identity; but what our organisation (including its name and logo) are known for.

Our corporate identity/brand is synonymous with the services we deliver and customers' experiences. Therefore it has an important part to play in improving information and satisfaction levels with the Council.

### 4.3.5 Consultation and engagement

Communications and Marketing will continue to provide expertise and work closely with departments. The aim for the period ahead is to ensure that best practice is applied to all consultation and engagement activities undertaken by services; and for the whole Council to take a more corporate approach to planning and scheduling such activities.

A key development is the commencement of an Annual Satisfaction Survey in October, which Policy Committee approved in June 2012. This will gather public perceptions on things like value for money, quality of life, health and wellbeing, as well as measuring overall satisfaction. It will also enable to Council to effectively measure business objectives; evaluate the impact of key strategies; benchmark against other local authorities; and inform improvements to information provision and customer service.

Communications activity will also take account of the Localism Act, in order to help empower communities.

### 4.3.6 Corporate Print Strategy

The print service provides the management and delivery of a Corporate Print Strategy. The strategy will enable the whole council to make efficiency savings on the cost of maintaining and running its printers and its printed materials. Whilst providing an effective print provision that will be a balanced deployment of various equipment types to best suit the circumstances and needs of individual locations and personnel.  There are further opportunities to work jointly with partners where we have shared premises.

The Corporate Print Strategy has already helped to save the Council close to £500,000 in its first 20 months. Savings are expected to continue and the overall £1.5m target is expected to be achieved by 2014/15.

### 4.3.7 Media

In order to take a more strategic approach in future the Media team will ensure that a clearer link is made between the Council's strategic direction, its policies and the services it provides to the people of Nottinghamshire in all proactive media work.  The Media Team will continue to work closely with committees via the Committee Chair to ensure that policy decisions are appropriately publicised.

### 4.3.8 Employee engagement

There has been a more targeted and streamlined approach to engaging employees over the last 18 months. Good progress has been made in the way we provide information and engage with employees.

Further improvements to the intranet alongside encouraging more two-way communication across the organisations will be a priority going forward.

 A number of teams are already piloting the use of Yammer for project working and more senior managers will be encouraged to take part in online 'surgeries' where they answer questions from employees in a live forum.

## 5. Evaluation

A half-term review will be undertaken in September 2013 when further targets will be set for 2013-14. The following targets are for 2012-13:

| Type of measure | Target for 2012-13 |
|---|---|
| Website (web analytics) | • Raise the use of public website from 1 in 6 of the local population to 1 in 5 by the end of 2014<br>• Raise the annual average net satisfaction with the website from 43.5% to 50%<br>• Maintain a top 10 place in the SOCITM Council website satisfaction listings |
| Social media (social media analytics) | • Increase Twitter followers from 5,000 to 8,000 by April 2013<br>• Be in the top 20 local authorities by followers/ likes as a percentage of population |
| Channel shift (web analytics) | • Reduce unsuccessful visits to the website to under 14% by March 2013<br>• Increase % of visits to the website that undertake a transaction (other then finding information) to 24% by March 2013 |
| News media (Vuelio reports) | • 5,000 pieces of news coverage<br>• 87% of media coverage is positive/neutral |
| Income and savings (financial reports) | • Corporate Print Strategy to have saved an additional £400k by March 2013<br>• £215k income from graphics<br>• £640k income from print<br>• £100k income from translation and interpretation |
| Campaigns (campaign evaluation reports) | • 90% of campaigns achieve all of their objectives<br>• 80% recognition of County Council as the organiser of key events |
| Employee engagement (Staff Survey) | • 70% of employees who receive Frontline read some/all of it<br>• 57% (increase of 5%) of employees feel that the Council keeps them informed |
| Carbon footprint | The Corporate Print Strategy will deliver:<br>• 33% reduction of $CO_2$ emissions<br>• 33% reduction of energy usage |

These measures are stretching but realistic targets, which have been established from baseline data, trend analysis from national and local data, as well as benchmarking against other local authorities.

## 6. Supporting documents

This strategy is supported by a range of other key documents that have been approved by elected members, which include:

- Corporate Identity Policy (approved by Full Council, January 26, 2012)
- Advertising and Sponsorship Policy (approved by Policy Committee, July 18, 2012)
- Media Relations Protocol (Appendix A1)

The strategy will also be supported by an operating procedure that will be agreed with departments and a range of delivery plans.

# Appendix A1 - Media Relations Protocol

**1.0  Introduction**

The importance of public communications is made clear in the Explanatory Memorandum published by CLG alongside the Local Government Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011):

> *"For a community to be a healthy local democracy, local understanding of the operation of the democratic process is important, and effective communication is key to developing that understanding. Local authority publicity is important to transparency and to localism, as the public need to know what their local authority is doing if they are to hold it to account. In order to hold their local authority to account, the public need to have information about what their council is doing and why it is doing it."*

This protocol outlines the way that the media relations team operates at Nottinghamshire County Council. It has been written with consideration to the guidelines and practices outlined in the DCLG code.

**2.0  Purpose of the team**

The purpose of the media relations team is to keep residents informed of the full range of activity and services provided by Nottinghamshire County Council.

The team work with the media to promote the work and policies and services of the Council in order to enhance its reputation at a local, regional and national level. The team also promotes the ways that residents can engage with the Council in order to influence decision-making.

The media plays a significant role in informing residents about what the council does and how it spends their money. It is therefore vital that the team works effectively with the media.

**3.0  Working with Elected members**

The Department of Communities and Local Government Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity prohibits the use public money to promote political parties. However, councils have a duty to be open, honest and transparent about their policies.

The Media Team works to promote the policies of the Council, in doing so they work with Committees, represented by their Committee Chairman (and in their absence Vice Chairmen), who are often the face of a particular policy.  The media team also work closely with service areas to provide case studies to help illustrate the policies and work of the Council. The code makes it clear that it is important for Councils to communicate what action they are taking but also why they are taking that action.

Communications functions therefore should prioritise not who to publicise but how to best inform, explain and justify the actions and decisions of the local authority to residents and stakeholders. They are not about promoting individual councillors and their views.

Due to a limited resource it would not be possible to provide media support to all 67 elected members as well as effectively promoting the work of the Council. The Council receives approximately 2,000 media enquiries and generates 4,000 pieces of media coverage each year.

However, in terms of all elected members, the media team can provide the following level of support:

- provide information, advice and guidance about working with the media to all elected members and officers
- provide media contacts upon request
- ensure that all members divisional funds allocation is promoted via the Council's newspaper and website
- work with all members to promote LIS schemes

In addition the team also offers a single point of contact for all media related activity that is not party political in nature.

## 4.0  Handling media enquiries

Media officers will arrange appropriate responses to all media enquiries that come into the team.

Officers who are directly approached by a member of the media should refer the journalist to the media team in the first instance.

The media often work to very tight deadlines and the media team has no control over the timing of media enquiries, although every effort is made to encourage media outlets to submit enquiries in a timely fashion.

In order that the Council is open and transparent it is imperative that all media enquiries are given appropriate priority by all Members and officers of the Council.

## 5.0  Photocalls

Where appropriate, the media team will arrange suitable publicity opportunities for events or openings on behalf of service departments that will include photo opportunities. Occasionally, services may also choose to arrange their own photographer if this is considered appropriate.

Services are responsible for all other aspects surrounding the organisation of the event that will include deciding who is on the guest list and managing the event on the day.

In terms of the official publicity that is directly managed by the media team, there is a clear protocol on who leads publicity from the Council. This ensures that the media get a suitable image or interview on the day with the appropriate elected member or officer.

## 5.1 Custom and practice

Many of the photo opportunities are connected with the delivery of capital projects. The custom and practice for these is as follows:

K Turf cutting/starts of works – Committee Chairman for Finance and Property

K Topping off ceremony/work in progress – Committee Chairman for relevant service area

K Opening/service launch – Chairman/Vice-Chairman (Leader or Committee Chairman if civic representatives are unavailable)

The media team also arranges publicity on a daily basis for a variety of events, service developments, committee decisions, announcements, etc. These will usually feature the relevant Committee Chairman or the Chairman or Leader of the Council depending upon the issue and availability.

Ward members should make their own publicity arrangements with media.

## 5.2  LIS Schemes

The exception to the above is for LIS schemes when photocalls arranged by the media team will feature the ward member who has signed off the scheme.

## 6.0 Exceptions – pre-election

During a pre-election period, the Council continues to conduct business and provide services.  The Council can still continue to publicise the decisions and work of the Council, but elected members would not be promoted in any publicity.

The Code on Recommended Practice for Local Government Publicity (2011) places restrictions on Council publicity during the run-in to elections. The code makes sure that any publicly-funded publicity is balanced and does not appear to advantage a particular candidate or political party.

A good test is to ask the question: "Could a reasonable person conclude that public money is being spent to influence the outcome of an election?"

During this period proactive council publicity should not seek to deal with politically controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in a way that identifies them with individual Members or groups of Members. This is to make sure that no individual councillor or political party gains an unfair advantage by appearing in corporate publicity.

Events, such as opening ceremonies or community celebrations arranged by the Council in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election.

Elected members' web pages hosted on the Council's website will be suspended during this period.

Further advice on publicity during election periods is available from the Monitoring Officer.

**APPENDIX 2 Proposed Structure**

# Communications and Marketing

### Nottinghamshire County Council

**Service Director**
Communications
x1

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**Group Manager**
DIGITAL

Senior Digital
Officer
X2

Digital Officer
X4

Communications
Assistant
x4

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**Group Manager**
MARKETING AND
ENGAGEMENT

Senior Marketing
Officer
X2

Marketing Officer
X2

Communications
Officer
(Publications)
X1

Graphic Design
and
Production Officer
x1

Graphic Design
Officer
x3

Graphic Design
Assistant
x1

Senior
Consultation
Officer
X1

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**Translation and
Interpretation
service**
- subject to review

Translation
Officer
X1

Translation
Assistant
x1

**Translators and
Interpreters**

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**Group Manager**
MEDIA RELATIONS

Senior Media Officers
X6

Senior Account Officer
x4

Communications
Development Officer
X1

Business Support
Assistant
X2

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**Group Manager**
PRINT

Senior Print
Officer (Services)
x1

Senior Print
Officer
(Production)
x1

Print Room
Officer
x4

Print Room
Technician
X3

Print Assistant
(Services)
x1

Print Assistant
(General)
X1