REPORT OF THE LEADER OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

UPDATED BRAND POLICY

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Council's Brand Policy and outline the next steps for brand developments.

Information and Advice

2. Full Council approved the Council's first Corporate Identity Policy (**Appendix A**) on 26 January 2012, which established control over the brand for the first time. Previously, there had been more than 100 different logos in use and recognition of council services was poor, which was affecting customer perceptions of value for money and satisfaction with services.

3. Significant progress has been made to implement a stronger, more consistent visual identity or 'brand'. The single version of the brand is visible in all types of communications and everything the Council delivers, communicates or supports. This has included ensuring the brand is used consistently on building signage, vehicle livery, bus shelters, literature, stationery, uniforms and digital channels such as the website and social media.

4. Branding is not purely a case of a name or logo or how something looks. It fundamentally affects key customer perceptions as branding helps services to be identified and recognised. It therefore plays an important part in raising awareness of services, customer perceptions of value for money for their Council Tax and increasing overall satisfaction with the Council.

Current branding position

5. A strong brand which is prominent and consistently used has been achieved, with virtually full compliance with the updated brand. The updated brand has become part of business as usual and is built into service delivery through the use of templates and is reflected in the branding of assets.

6. Current recognition of the brand is good. In December 2014 a sample of service users was surveyed at a range of Council venues to measure awareness of the updated logo. The survey involved showing the updated logo and the two previous versions and asking service users to identify which they thought was the current County Council logo. Results from the 179 respondents showed that well over a half of people recognised the latest logo compared to just over a third when surveyed in 2012. The process for a brand to become established and gain full recall with its customers and stakeholders takes time - especially when

competing against older versions of its own brand. Therefore this is a positive result with such high recognition after just two years.

7. Increased recognition of council services, funding and involvement as a result of improved branding has resulted in improved reputation and customer satisfaction. Studies have shown that one of the key drivers of satisfaction is perceived value for money and how well informed people feel. In the 2014 Nottinghamshire Residents' Annual Satisfaction survey, 53% of people responded positively about 'feeling informed' (an increase of 10 percentage points from the 2008 Place Survey baseline); 47% agreed the Council provides 'good value for money' (an increase of 18 percentage points from the 2008 baseline); and overall satisfaction with the Council was 61% (an increase of 21 percentage points from the 2008 baseline). Improved branding has made a significant contribution to these improved key performance indicators.

8. This was confirmed through external recognition in 2012 at the Local Government Communications Reputation Awards – the Council was 'highly commended' in the category of Place Branding "for the authority that can best show how they have enhanced the reputation of the local area through successful place branding".

9. There are two significant developments which need attention to ensure that the Council's brand continues to be in a strong position:

- Digital branding - ensuring that the same principles are applied to online (digital) branding as to offline branding. The many variations of digital systems and information, plus the fast moving nature of technology, means that digital branding can be more complex than branding offline items.

- Future alternative service delivery models – where Council services are not delivered directly by the Council requires clear policies and processes to ensure the Council's contribution to funding or delivery of services is accurately reflected. For example, when considering models such as trusts, community benefit societies or joint ventures.

10. These key issues are reflected in the proposed Brand Policy.

Updated Brand Policy

11. The proposed Brand Policy (**Appendix B**), which replaces the original Corporate Identity Policy, outlines key principles for how the Council's brand is used and governed.

12. The Brand Policy complements the brand guidelines which is an operational working document that sets out the rules for how the brand is followed and applied. The Communications and Marketing team ensures the brand guidelines are kept up to date and correctly applied.

13. The key differences (updates) contained in the Brand Policy when compared with the original Corporate Identity Policy are highlighted below and have been marked in italics in the draft Brand Policy document:

- **Brand values** – this new section includes brand values that support the three core values in the Council's Strategic Plan. They include being: Relevant, Trusted, Universal,

Authentic, Innovative, Modern, Customer-focused, Joined up, Engaging, Open and Transparent. These are explained further in the Brand Policy document.

- **Digital branding** - a paragraph has been included to reference the need for consistent digital branding which is dealt with in practice through regular reviews of the Council's brand guidelines.

- **Strategic approach to branding of alternative service delivery models** - this includes, but is not limited to, trusts, commissioned services, arms lengths companies and new joint ventures. The policy mentions that the Communications and Marketing service should be consulted at the earliest possible stage, that there may be a need for research and market testing in relation to new brand development and that appropriate wording regarding branding needs to be included in the contract for any alternative service delivery models. The Brand Policy provides the principles on which the brand guidelines will continue to be developed, to best reflect the branding relationship with other organisations

Next steps for brand development

County Boundary signs

14. A key area where the Council's brand has not been applied in a consistent way are the boundary signs that welcome people to Nottinghamshire. County boundary signs are important for 'place promotion' and the economic benefits of attracting businesses and visitors.

15. This signage is currently only replaced in its natural life cycle (this can be up to 20 years) and therefore the majority of boundary signage carries the Council's old branding. This will be reviewed, balancing any costs implications with reputational and economic impact in positioning Nottinghamshire as a great place to visit and do business.

16. There is also the potential for sponsorship to be considered as a way to offset some of the costs. This has been used by other local authorities.

Alternative service delivery models

17. Alternative service delivery models present a challenge for the Council's brand going forwards. Potential risks include the Council no longer being recognised as the provider or funder (reputational, value for money and customer satisfaction impact) and a new venture not being appropriately branded could negatively impact on retaining or securing new business (financial impact). There is also the risk of confusing the public about where accountability rests which would make it more difficult to support the values of being open and transparent.

18. The Brand Policy illustrates the principles that need to be considered and applied in relation to each alternative service delivery model and the specific relationship with all relevant partners. This will often require bespoke negotiations and the Communications and Marketing team should be consulted at the outset of negotiations for any new venture to support development of the principles and guidelines for any new or revised branding. Once agreed it is recommended that these will be detailed at the stage of preparing contracts to

ensure clarity, efficient partnership working and future protection of the Council's identity and reputation.

19. Where it is proven that a new venture will be operating in new or competitive marketplaces, it may be beneficial to develop a new brand to be used when seeking new business. Getting the brand right can be critical to the long-term success of any new venture as it needs to have high levels of recall and emotionally connect with clients, customers and employees. A strategic and systematic approach is recommended which develops a brand based on customer insight, market analysis and taking into account the strategic objectives and visions of the new venture. It is important to note that building up recognition for any new brand will take time and need promotion that will inevitably incur a cost for any new entity.

20. Consideration would also need to be given to how the new organisation's brand would work with the Council's brand and, importantly, which would take primacy within a range of different contexts.

21. Going forwards, the Brand Policy applied in conjunction with the brand guidelines will ensure the Council's brand has appropriate visibility with clear and consistent presentation of the branding relationship.

Financial Implications

22. The branding approach for the Council outlined in this paper will be delivered at no additional cost as part of business as usual.

23. Investment in specialist branding work may need to be considered as part of developing alternative service delivery models where this is appropriate – for example, when competing in new marketplaces.

24. The measurable impact of having a strong corporate identity (as shown by the 2014 Nottinghamshire Residents' Annual Satisfaction Survey results) is recognised but this is likely to become particularly important as the Council develops new and complex relationships to deliver services in different ways.

25. Any future investment in bespoke branding needs to represent good value for money and be proportionate to business objectives.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

1. To ensure that the Council's brand remains strong, prominent and consistent in order to ensure continued progress with recognition of council services and residents feeling more informed, satisfied and feeling that the Council provides good value for money.

2. To ensure that any alternative service delivery models are branded appropriately to be both operationally effective and reflect the contribution made by/the relationship with the Council.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

1)   Notes the progress made to consolidate the brand over the past two years and the resulting contribution to key customer satisfaction measures.

2)   Approves the new Brand Policy (an update to and replacement of the former Corporate Identity Policy).

3)   Agrees that county boundary signs are reviewed further in terms of any potential economic impact with a report brought back before Policy Committee

Background documents

None

Appendix A – original Corporate Identity Policy
Appendix B – proposed new Brand Policy

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Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Martin Done

Constitutional Comments [GR 30/04/15]

1. The Policy Committee has the delegated authority to receive and note the contents of this report [GR 30/04/15]

Financial Comments [SES 30/4/15]

2. The financial implications are set out in the report

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

- 'None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All