

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

TRANSFORMING COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Purpose of the Report

1. To recommend a One-Council approach to transform communications and marketing to make savings and be more audience focused.

Information and Advice

Background

2. The Council's Communications and Marketing Strategy was approved by Policy Committee in September 2012, with an overall aim 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." This Strategy will be updated later this calendar year after the finalisation of the new Strategic Plan 2014-18.
3. The Council has moved to a strategic approach to communications and marketing which means any activity undertaken must have a clear purpose to directly affect Key Performance Indicators. For example, communications seeks to influence the overall Council satisfaction measure by targeting the key drivers: how informed people feel, value for money perceptions and how able residents feel they can influence decision making. Good results have been achieved and a paper on the results of campaigns undertaken in 2012-13 was recently reported to Policy Committee. This has led to the Council's Communications and Marketing Team being nationally recognised as the 'Communications Team of the Year' in May 2013 by the Local Government Association (LGCommunications).
4. There is also a clear approach to prioritising available Communications and Marketing resources. Policy Committee agreed in May 2013 that this is based on the following points, but with greater weighting on the two criteria shown in bold below.
 - Strength of alignment with Strategic Plan objectives
 - Strength of alignment with national policy, statutory need and performance targets
 - **Strength of potential to save money, improve efficiency or generate income**

- **Potential to protect or enhance the Council's reputation**
 - The contribution communications can make to achieve the desired outcome
5. Along with the rest of the Council, savings need to be made in Communications and Marketing to help achieve the £154m budget gap over the next three years. This is at a time when pressure on Communications and Marketing resources is predicted to increase as the Council makes changes to services, implements budget savings and undertakes restructures. These circumstances mean there will be an increased need for change communications, consultations with communities and updates to service literature and web based information – at the same time as the available resources are diminishing.
 6. This means the Council needs to further transform Communications and Marketing to be even more audience-focused (to best meet customers' needs) and even more cost effective. The proposed approach is outlined below.

Approach to transforming Communications and Marketing

7. A more audience-focused approach means listening to and responding to the needs of our customers. In practice this will involve a greater use of customer insight to inform strategies; an increased ability for residents to choose what information interests them; and a rise in customer transactions done online.
8. Going forwards, it is proposed that there will be three levels of service provided by the Communications and Marketing team:
 - **Core offer to whole Council** – this represents 'business as usual' and includes web/intranet updates, media releases etc. Services will benefit from an improved core offer thanks to a re-focused and improved mix of communications and marketing channels (see below for details). The Communications and Marketing team will continue to deliver corporate communications and marketing channels, lead on reputation management and ensure effective communications for emergency/business continuity situations.
 - **Priority projects and campaigns** – these are high priority pieces of work which support the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan which are discrete and time bound. Such projects and campaigns will be agreed through Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). Where these cannot be anticipated, CLT will be consulted about the best way to resource any additional and unforeseen campaigns. Major development of corporate communications and marketing channels will also fall into this category.
 - **Business cases for anything above and beyond the core offer** – where a service requests communications and marketing activity or resources which are above and beyond the core offer and does not fall into a priority project or campaign, then a clear business case will be required.
9. Development of corporate communications and marketing channels is proposed to take place as follows:
 - **Establish more audience specific publications** - instead of producing County News, the Council Tax leaflet and What's On publications the Council

will move to providing a targeted annual guide for residents. The District Councils will be consulted about the Council Tax leaflet. Consideration will be given to a guide for retired/semi retired people and one for families with school age children, supplemented by What's On leaflets at key times of the year.

- **Improve digital communication to support channel shift** – make major improvements to the Council's web and intranet sites (including greater usability when accessed through mobile devices), improve use of social media (at the last Policy Committee a paper on controlled expansion was approved) and introduce a system to enable effective email marketing.
- **Income generation through advertising and sponsorship** – this is to become a priority project in order to maximise the potential to generate income from council-owned assets (at the last Policy Committee a paper on this was approved).

10. Other changes that are envisaged include:

- **An overall reduction in printed literature** – with a move to online information wherever possible (e.g. the default position will be downloadable fact sheets on the Council's website rather than service specific leaflets). Of course, information will always be made accessible for those who are not online.

Other Options Considered

11. Transformation is required in order to ensure a high quality Communications and Marketing service can continue to be provided with less resources, so that the achievement of Corporate Performance Indicators is not compromised.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. To continue to deliver a high quality Communications and Marketing service which meets the needs of the whole Council, its customers and its Strategic Plan commitments.

13. To ensure best value for money in Communications and Marketing activity, making the budget savings required and maximising income potential from advertising and sponsorship.

Statutory and Policy Implications

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

15. The three levels of service provided by the Communications and Marketing team will be resourced as follows:

- **Core offer to whole Council** – resourced through existing corporate Communications and Marketing budget. Those services requiring design/print services which are not deemed part of a priority project or campaign will continue to need to pay for design/print services as is currently the case.
- **Priority projects and campaigns** – resourced through existing corporate Communications and Marketing budget where possible, but may need to be supplemented by other budget sources. The Communications and Marketing team must be consulted before any external funding bid is submitted by service areas that require Communications and Marketing resources.
- **Business cases for anything above and beyond the core offer** - any service which wants a level of service above the core offer to the whole Council and that is not deemed a priority project campaign, will need to be charged on a full cost recovery basis.

16. The approach to transforming communications and marketing outlined in this paper will contribute to £178,000 saving in 2014-15.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

17. Equalities implications have been considered as part of compiling this report. As no negative impacts are anticipated on any protected group, an Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1) Policy Committee approves the approach to transforming Communications and Marketing as set out in this paper in order to achieve £178,000 savings.

Councillor Alan Rhodes
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Martin Done, Service Director Communications and Marketing on 0115 9772026, or email martin.done@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (SG 25/09/2013)

18. Policy Committee is the appropriate body to decide the issues set out in this report; it is responsible for the Council's communications policy and its implementation.

Financial Comments (SM 24/09/2013)

19. 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