

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY 2014-16

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the proposed new Communications and Marketing Strategy 2014-16 and a revised staffing structure.

Information and Advice

2. The Communications and Marketing Strategy 2014-16 (**Appendix A**) sets out the priorities and ambition of the function over the next two years.
3. The key features of the strategy, which focuses on the outcome of communications rather than the activity itself, include the need to:
 - a. Maximise satisfaction with the Council by keeping people informed, demonstrating value for money and showing people how they can influence decision making
 - b. Support the delivery of savings through cost avoidance – taking early or more holistic action to avoid more expensive service delivery (eg. recruiting in house rather than agency foster carers and supporting older people to live at home rather than in residential care)
 - c. Generate income for the Council
4. It is anticipated that there will be increased demand on Communications and Marketing during a period when many of our Council services are expected to undergo transformation over the next few years under Redefining Your Council.
5. Digital remains the single biggest environmental factor that is changing the way that people want to receive information, seek answers to questions and receive services. Designing digital services that are so good that those who can, will choose to use them is a key theme of this strategy. This has the potential to support the delivery of savings by lowering the transaction costs.
6. Campaign activity will support the delivery of nearly £4m of cost avoidance for the authority over the coming year and this is an area that will be prioritised. In addition, marketing will support the delivery of nearly £700,000 of income across the authority. Some examples can be seen in the appendices of the strategy document.

7. Clear outcomes have been set with challenging targets to enable the strategy to be evaluated at the end of the period.
8. The next stage will be to develop a delivery plan that will set out the timescales and outcomes for each stage over the coming two years.
9. The proposed new structure (**Appendix B**) reflects the new approach to Strategic Communications and is designed to contribute to the achievement of increased customer satisfaction, cost avoidance or income generation.
10. It includes a number of revised posts that will remain in the permanent structure alongside some fixed-term resource to deliver the Digital First project that is clearly marked in the structure charts. The fixed-term resource will be funded from already approved budget allocated from the Transformation Fund.
11. The new structure would deliver a saving of £152,000 in 2015/16 which represents a 12% reduction in staffing costs that includes a reduction of 5% for a vacancy control factor. This represents a 19% reduction in FTEs.
12. Alongside the permanent structure will sit a temporary resource to deliver the Digital First project. This will be flexible to allow for the demands of this transformation project to be met going forward. It also reflects the need to bring in specialist skills to optimise the customer online experience.
13. A comprehensive staff consultation that includes the communications and marketing teams, union representatives and senior managers across the authority has been carried out on the strategy. A consultation of the structure has also taken place within the team and unions.

Information and Advice

Other Options Considered

14. To retain the current structure but this would not allow us to take full advantage of the digital opportunities or maximise cost avoidance and income generation activity.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. The existing strategy runs until September 2014.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), 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

17. The financial implications are contained within paragraph 11 of this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Policy Committee approves

- 1) The Communications and Marketing Strategy 2014-16
- 2) The proposed new staffing structure

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Constitutional Comments [GR 23/09/14]

18. Pursuant to Part A of Section 2 of the County Council's Constitution the Policy Committee has the delegated authority to a) approve the Communications and Marketing Strategy b) approve relevant staffing structures subject to appropriate consultation having been undertaken with the recognised trade unions

Financial Comments [SEM 24/9/14]

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

Appendices

Appendix A – Communications and Marketing Strategy 2014-16

Appendix B – Communications and Marketing team structure chart