

Policy and Resources Committee

25 July 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Communications Action Plan 2017-18

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Helen Bell, Communications Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the Communications Action Plan 2017-18 be approved.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

The Communications Action Plan is a key document which identifies the actions the team will focus on in relation to the corporate priorities.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	25 July 2017

Communications Action Plan 2017-18

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Maidstone Borough Council's Communication Strategy 2016-20, agreed by Policy and Resources Committee last year, outlines the council's responsibility to communicate effectively with our residents and stakeholders.
 - 1.2 The strategy outlines the approach the team will take to ensure communication activity is the best possible and helps achieve the council's vision. This is detailed in the action plan.
 - 1.3 Since the strategy and action plan was presented last year, a number of key changes have occurred within the team and organisation which requires the Communications Action Plan to be updated.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It is important when communicating with our residents and stakeholders that consistency is maintained so that our messages are clear and regularly reinforced.
- 2.2 Following the update of the council's Strategic Plan 2017/18, three main action areas were outlined (see below) and these now form part of the update to the Communications Action plan:
 - Providing a Clean and Safe Environment
 - A Home for Everyone
 - Regenerating the Town Centre
- 2.3 The Communications Action Plan is an appendix to the Communications Strategy. It details the principles, roles and responsibilities and core offer of the team. The original strategy was approved by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 26 October 2016.
- 2.4 It was agreed as part of the council's budget strategy for 2017-18 that the marketing and communications resource in Maidstone Culture and Leisure and the corporate Communications Team be brought together. The purpose of this was to create one team to carry out marketing and communication across all channels for our whole range of audiences be they visitors, residents, businesses or partners.
- 2.5 The Communications Action Plan details how we share our story through our communications with the narrative being informed by our Strategic Plan. It focuses on the 'what, who, when and why.'
- 2.6 With the update to the Strategic Plan and changes within the communications team, it was felt a refresh of the Communications Action Plan was appropriate.

2.7 Over the course of the previous year many actions set out in the last action plan have been achieved including:

- The launch of our new standalone magazine 'Borough Insight' which is delivered to households across the borough with Royal Mail to communicate directly with our residents.
- A new intranet has been launched on the same CMS (Content Management System) as the main council website, allowing the Communications team flexibility to develop a staff site which can be reactive to the organisation's needs.
- A three month food waste campaign has been carried out engaging with residents and primary school children to encourage the use of food bins. Over 3,000 young people at 11 local primary schools were targeted with the use of a fun theatre workshop educating them about the environmental benefits of food recycling.
- Budget roadshows were held across the borough to engage with residents about how the council spends its money.
- The successful transition of the old Gateway to Maidstone Link which included the design and brand of the new building and internal graphics.
- Our social media engagement continues to grow with now over 11,000 Twitter followers making Maidstone Borough Council the highest for all local authorities in Kent and 2,500 likes on our Facebook page.
- Preparation of a Narrative Report 2017, published with the Statement of Accounts, which provides an annual update on the council's progress towards achieving its strategic plan priorities.
- Publication of 'Who's Who' and introduction of monthly Members' Bulletin to improve regular communication with councillors about staffing and advance notice of council events.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Keep the current Communications Action Plan. Whilst there have been no changes to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011, some of the existing plan's objectives have been completed or superseded therefore providing little effectiveness in terms of communication activity.

3.2 Approve the new Communications Action Plan to enable the organisation to communicate with its residents and stakeholders effectively and respond to changing circumstances.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As set out in paragraph 3.2, approve the new Communications Action Plan. A comprehensive review has been undertaken of the previous action plan and observations made now form part of the update. The Communications team plays a key role in how residents, staff and stakeholders perceive the council. We recognise the importance of reputation and working to protect and enhance the council's trusted name. The update to the Communications Action Plan demonstrates our commitment to continue this in an ever changing environment.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 None.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Communications Action Plan once adopted will be uploaded to the website as an appendix to the strategy and implemented as set out in Appendix A.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Communications Action Plan is a key document which details how communications activity can support the council's ongoing commitment to residents by promoting activities and services that support and deliver the strategic priorities in the council's strategic plan.	Communications Manager
Risk Management	This is an update to the existing Communications Action Plan and is a public document ensuring the council is accountable.	Communications Manager
Financial	There are no direct financial implications from the updated Communications	Section 151 Officer

	Action Plan. The various actions described in the Plan will help Marketing and Communications deliver a planned £50,000 budget saving in 2017/18.	
Staffing	The Communications Action Plan will be monitored and reported on by the Communications Manager. Actions in the plan include internal engagement and communication activities.	Communications Manager
Legal	There are no legal implications arising from this report.	Communications Manager
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Large campaigns will need to include stakeholder analysis and information on how our residents like to be communicated with and appropriate methods of communication	Communications Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The updated Communications Action Plan will support decisions made by the Council across areas of its work.	Communications Manager
Community Safety	The updated Communications Action Plan will support decisions made by the Council across areas of its work.	Communications Manager
Human Rights Act	The updated Communications Action Plan will support decisions made by the Council across areas of its work.	Communications Manager
Procurement	Any procurement for communication activities will be taken within procurement rules.	Communications Manager
Asset Management	Communications has a key role to play in promoting our assets.	Communications Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Communications Action Plan 2017/18
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Communication and Engagement Strategy 2016-20

http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/90470/Communications-and-Engagement-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf