

APPENDIX P

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 5 FEBRUARY 2013

Title:

PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY 2013 TO 2018

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Stefan Reynolds]

[Wards Affected: All]

Note Pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972

An annexe to this report contains exempt information by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Information relating to any individual (paragraph 1);

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (paragraph 3).

Summary and purpose:

This report proposes a new Public Relations Strategy for Waverley. Robust communications are vital to protect and enhance Waverley's reputation, increase customer satisfaction with our services and support the delivery of Waverley's Corporate priorities and objectives. The Strategy will deliver a clear understanding of Waverley's desired public image and key messages to residents, stakeholders, staff and the public sector – and support Waverley in its aim of becoming one of the leading authorities in the Country. The Strategy will support a proactive and dynamic approach to Public Relations.

Policy discussions that took place as part of the Organisational Development Star Chamber in November 2012 have informed this work. The proposed Strategy represents a step-change from current ways of working. In order to deliver the Strategy goals and principles, changes to current staffing arrangements within the Communications Team are proposed and are set out in (Exempt) Annexe 1.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Robust communications are vital to protect and enhance Waverley's reputation, increase customer satisfaction with our services and support the delivery of Waverley's corporate priorities and objectives.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the creation of the full strategy – particularly acknowledging that not all residents and customers are able to access information using the internet.

Environment and Climate Change Implications:

Promoting greater use of the internet and other electronic means of communication has a positive impact on environmental implications by reducing the use of paper / the need to travel.

Financial implications:

The proposals within (Exempt) Annexe 1 will secure an ongoing saving for Waverley.

Legal Implications:

These are set out in (Exempt) Annexe 1.

BACKGROUND

1. Work is being undertaken to prepare a new Public Relations Strategy for Waverley. The Council's communication function sits within the Organisational Development service. External communications such as publications, press releases, the website and newer forms of communication such as social media originate from the central Communication Team. Internal communications tools such as the staff intranet also fall within the remit of the team.
2. The team currently employs a campaign-based approach to support major communications projects, such as the recent successful (and award-winning) campaign to launch the new waste and recycling service in April 2012.
3. Adopted in 2008, this approach allowed messages to be planned and communicated using a wider range of communication channels. The campaign-based style of working has been successful in increasing the impact and reach of information. It has also allowed Waverley to demonstrate to taxpayers how it is achieving its corporate priorities and to build upon the council's reputation.
4. To support the aim and ambition of becoming a leading authority, it has been identified that Waverley now needs to adopt a corporate public relations strategy, which will have a broader remit. This will aim to clearly define the council's identity and key communication messages to different groups, including residents, customers, the Government/public sector, suppliers & stakeholders and staff.
5. It is anticipated that the Strategy will cover the period 2013 to 2018 and will be integral to individual service strategies. It should drive ambitious, bold ways of working and communicating with customers, stakeholders and staff. This will ensure consistency of customer experience and message across the organisation.

Why is a Public Relations Strategy important?

6. The GOALS of the strategy are to:
 - Deliver a Strategy to support the achievement of **Waverley's Corporate Plan priorities**, with particular regard to providing **Value for Money**.

- **Increase customer satisfaction** with and **awareness** of Waverley's services. Waverley delivers around 110 services, and these need to be accessible and promoted to those who need or wish to use them. Research by IPSOS MORI has long shown that there is a strong link between how well informed residents feel and overall satisfaction with their local council.
- Identify and **promote Waverley's key messages and identity**. Waverley's priorities are clear in the form of Waverley's Corporate Plan 2012 to 15 – **VALUE**. However, there is not yet a clearly understood identity for how Waverley wishes to be seen by others. The Public Relations Strategy is an excellent opportunity to clarify this for the organisation, Members and staff.
- Allow us to be **more proactive than reactive**. Big communications campaigns such as a new leisure centre or waste service do not happen every year so the key messages will need to drive communications activity. We need to make sure we make the best use of our beautiful Borough, and help deliver the Corporate Plan priority to protect and enhance our **Environment**. The strategy will deliver a series of themes to focus on for each year, and a plan for how to deliver this.
- **Protect and enhance Waverley's reputation** in every aspect of our business, encouraging transparency and accountability. As a public body we need to be able to stand up to scrutiny and challenge.
- Deliver **Value for money** by making our Public Relations Strategy **efficient and effective**. We also need to support the Corporate Plan priority of 'Understanding our Residents' Needs' by:
 - **Using data, intelligence and feedback** to deliver the messages that people want/need to hear, to the right people in the right way. By having clear objectives we will be better able to evaluate the success of our communication efforts. We also have the opportunity make better use of research using the Citizens Panel, other forms of consultation and data such as 'MOSAIC's' socio-economic data.
 - Making **effective choices about communications channels**. The range of channels is growing and changing fast – from the traditional newspaper & press release to social media. Our website is a powerful tool to be developed to improve efficiency for our customers, and 24/7 information and services. With limited resources we need to target our efforts and focus on the channels that will have the biggest impact and give us the best return.
- Have **robust organisational development, internal communication and staff engagement** to support Waverley becoming one of the leading authorities in the country and to deliver excellent services to our customers.

Draft Principles of the Strategy

7. The following principles have been identified in consultation with the Communications team, the Communications Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Management Team. The Executive is asked to endorse these:

- Waverley is committed to becoming one of the **leading authorities** in the country and delivering excellent services
- Supporting Waverley to deliver **VALUE**
- As a people-based service organisation, the quality of our **staff** is vital in the delivery of excellent services. Our customers will judge Waverley based on the experience they have contacting our staff. **Organisational Development, Internal communication and staff engagement** are, therefore, a crucial part of our Public Relations Strategy.
- All communications, both internal and external will support the **identity** we wish to portray. This needs to include all communications including letters and emails. All staff should be clear about **'house' style, branding, tone and content**. We will agree regular themes we want to promote and produce a communications work plan to deliver this.
- We will prioritise **proactive** communications that deliver the messages that Waverley wants to communicate. We will not be led by media enquiries.
- Developing Waverley's **website** and delivering Waverley's website strategy is a priority, although we acknowledge that not all residents can access information electronically.
- We will challenge the use of existing **channels**, such as local papers, and measure their effectiveness through data and feedback. We will investigate making more use of other channels, such as radio, and keep this under ongoing review.

8. Waverley's Identity – our draft aspirations:

The aspirations around our identity will all support the delivery of Waverley's Corporate Plan priorities:

Value for Money

Affordable Housing

Leisure and lives

Understanding our Residents' Needs

Environment

Who	How they will see Waverley Borough Council – our aspirations
Residents	A well run organisation - a safe pair of hands. Provide VALUE for money and are forward thinking. To know about the range of services offered. Waverley is a great place to live – the Council help protect and enhance the beautiful Borough.
Customers that have direct contact with	A well run organisation - a safe pair of hands. Provide VALUE for money and are forward thinking. Efficient and get the job done. Honest and trustworthy.

Who	How they will see Waverley Borough Council – our aspirations
Waverley Staff	Friendly, caring and helpful – not officious, bureaucratic or cold. Waverley is a Great Place to Work Aiming to be one of the leading authorities in the country To take responsibility for providing excellent customer service A listening authority that wants to hear my ideas for improvement
Government / public sector	Aiming to be one of the leading authorities in the country. A well run organisation – a safe pair of hands. Innovative and forward thinking. Providing VALUE for money.
Stakeholders / suppliers / Businesses	A well run organisation – a safe pair of hands. Providing VALUE for money. Good to work with / do business with / partner. Efficient – not officious or bureaucratic.

Preparing Waverley’s Public Relations Strategy 2013 to 2018

9. The purpose of this report is to present the background and goals of the Public Relations Strategy to the Executive, and to ask the Executive to endorse the principles of the Strategy and Waverley’s key messages relating to how the authority wishes to be perceived. These will then be tested and developed in the preparation of the full Strategy.
10. The proposed Strategy represents a step-change from current ways of working. In order to deliver the Strategy goals and principles there are staffing proposals relating to the Communications team which are contained within (Exempt) Annexe 1.
11. A final Public Relations Strategy 2013 to 2018, and work plan for 2013/14 will be presented to the Executive in the Autumn and full Council in October 2013. This will be based on the proposals within this report and the following research:
 - Further consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service and Connectors (middle managers)
 - Consultation and ‘testing’ of the draft principles of the Strategy with Members.
 - A report to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June 2013.
 - Outcomes from two Communications Team away days held in December 2012
 - Information from Waverley Citizens’ Panel Surveys
 - Qualitative data from Citizens’ Panel focus groups to be held at the end of January/early February
 - Findings from a review of data held in MOSAIC – a powerful socio-economic data tool that allows us to profile our residents over a vast range of variables
 - The responses of an all-staff survey being undertaken in January 2013

- Best practice from other organisations – including identifying ‘Critical Friends’ who could support the process.

Recommendation

The Executive is asked to recommend to the Council that

1. the draft principles of the Public Relations Strategy 2013 to 2018 and Waverley’s key identity messages contained within paragraphs 7 & 8 of this report be endorsed; and
2. the staffing proposals at (Exempt) Annexe 1 be approved.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Sarah Bainbridge

Telephone: 01483 523148

E-mail: sarah.bainbridge@waverley.gov.uk