
Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	15 October 2020
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 August 2020
Report Author:	Nick Carter/Matt Pearce
Forward Plan Ref:	EX3951

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out a proposed Strategy for enhancing the Council's communications and engagement activities over the coming three years.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the actions set out in paragraph 2.9 of the attached document;
- 2.2 To note the financial implications associated with these actions and how it is proposed to address them;
- 2.3 To note that the Delivery Plan will be submitted to the Customer First Programme Board for approval by the end of November 2020.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>Financial resources will be required to deliver the recommendations set out in the attached Strategy. These costs include additional staffing costs and costs associated with commissioning external support. In addition to additional staffing, funding has also been provided to support Gov.Delivery. Most of the proposed staffing resources will be the subject of a pressure bid for the 2021/22 Budget so that the funding can be built into the base.</p> <p>The proposals in the Communications and Engagement Strategy seek to improve the Council's engagement with those</p>

	<p>individuals and communities whose voice is often not heard. It is also proposed to commission a BAME advocacy group to further improve communication and engagement with the BAME community. A summary of the financial implications is set out below.</p> <p>Voluntary and Community Sector Support Organisation (VC SSO) (£100k per annum). Will be funded through existing Community Solutions Fund in the first year. Partner contributions will be sought.</p> <p>BAME Advocacy Group (£25k per annum). Will be funded through existing budget agreed for 2020/21. Partner contributions are expected.</p> <p>Gov.Delivery (£20k per annum). To be funded through a budget pressure bid for 2021/22. Interim Covid-19 funding is currently being used.</p> <p>Additional staffing (circa £166k) – see staffing implications.</p>
Human Resources:	<p>It is proposed to create the following posts in support of the attached Strategy;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior project manager to oversee the implementation of the engagement recommendation within the Strategy. It is proposed to fund this post from the Transformation Fund (approval must be sought through Corporate Programme Board - £70k) – 12 month post. • Communications Team Leader (£62k per annum). • Digital Communications Officer (£34k per annum). <p>The latter two posts will be the subject of budget pressure bids for 2021/22.</p>
Legal:	None.
Risk Management:	<p>The proposals outlined in this Paper do not create significant negative risks for the Council. The proposals are geared at delivering on Council Strategy priorities, responding to the 2019 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and building on the positive opportunities from the Covid-19 Pandemic. As such greater risk probably lies in failing to act.</p>
Property:	None.

Policy:	The proposal supports the implementation of the Council Strategy 2019-2023.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The Strategy sets out a number of proposals which seek to address inequality by ensuring that communication channels reach all members of the local community and by ensuring our engagement objectives are focused on the most vulnerable.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				See above.
Environmental Impact:	X			Improved community engagement may well help deliver the Council's environmental objectives through enhancing community engagement.
Health Impact:	X			Improved community engagement may well help deliver the Council's health objectives through enhancing community engagement.
ICT Impact:		X		None at this stage.
Digital Services Impact:		X		None at this stage.

Council Strategy Priorities:				The proposals in the Strategy should assist in helping deliver all of the Council's priorities through improving communication and enhancing engagement which in itself will assist delivery of the priorities.
Core Business:				The proposals in this Strategy seek to enhance a number of existing core business activities e.g. communications and community resilience through a number of transformation actions supported by new resources.
Data Impact:				None.
Consultation and Engagement:	Corporate Board, Customer First Programme Board, Community Support Hub Core Group.			

4 Executive Summary and Supporting Information

- 4.1 An Executive Summary is included within the Strategy that is attached as Appendix B. The Strategy itself provides the Supporting Information.

5 Other options considered

- 5.1 None.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The need to enhance the Council's communication and engagement activities has been highlighted from a number of different directions not least the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. This Paper seeks to address this requirement through the development of a comprehensive Strategy with a range of recommendations aimed at enhancing both external and internal communications and our wider engagement activities.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 7.2 Appendix B – Communications and Engagement Strategy

Background Papers:

See Strategy document

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

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Change History

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1			
2			

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:*
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:*
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;*
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.*
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.*
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.*

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	To support approval and implementation of the Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023.
Summary of relevant legislation:	n/a
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No.
Name of assessor:	Nick Carter
Date of assessment:	30 th September 2020

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New or proposed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Function	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Is changing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To enhance the Council's communication and engagement Strategy.
Objectives:	Several as set out in the Strategy.
Outcomes:	Several as set out in the Strategy.
Benefits:	Communities are more aware of what the Council is doing and more engaged in local activities.

Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this. (Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	Improved and enhanced engagement across all of the groups given some can be difficult to engage. The Strategy is specifically geared to ensuring the Council is able to reach all those in the local community. More widely the engagement	
Disability		
Gender Reassignment		

Marriage and Civil Partnership	objectives set out in the Strategy and more specifically focused on addressing inequality
Pregnancy and Maternity	
Race	
Religion or Belief	
Sex	
Sexual Orientation	
Further Comments relating to the item:	

Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No.
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	

Name: Nick Carter

Date: 30th September 2020

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) (rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.