

Scrutiny Committee



Report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Vale Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 24 March 2022

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To: South Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21 March 2022

Draft Joint Communications and Engagement Strategy

Recommendation(s)

(a) That members consider the draft Joint Communications and Engagement Strategy attached in Appendix 1 and provide feedback for consideration to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement (Vale) Cabinet Member for Corporate Services (South).

Purpose of Report

1. To share the draft Joint Communications and Engagement Strategy and invite members to comment on it.

Strategic Objectives

2. The strategy will underpin and contribute to all corporate priorities but particularly *Working in an open and inclusive way (Vale) and Openness and accountability (South)*.

Background

1. The councils need a communications strategy to govern their communications and ensure consistent and tailored messaging reach its diverse audiences.
2. The strategy also covers engagement as the councils' Public Engagement Charter needed reviewing and given the natural synergy between communications and engagement it was an opportunity to bring the work streams together and reflect the service's structure.
3. A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Strategy that is embedded successfully across the councils will improve customer satisfaction, community engagement and the councils' reputations locally and nationally.
4. The strategy will:
 - set out the councils' approach for communicating and engaging with its audiences
 - describe how we will improve our communications with all sectors and groups in our communities using appropriate channels and methods
 - help deliver the councils' corporate priorities
 - establish that good communication is everyone's responsibility
 - raise awareness of the councils' leadership role in addressing district wide issues and delivering better outcomes for its communities
 - demonstrate the councils' commitment to fully inform and listen to its audiences
 - set the standards for good communications and engagement.
5. The strategy identifies several areas we need to strengthen over the life of it, based on feedback received, learning from best practice and spotting opportunities for continuous improvement. We will produce annual action plans to achieve these.
6. Evaluation will play an important part in ensuring the communications and engagement strategy is both delivered and effective, we'll do this through:
 - Establishing an annual action plan
 - Reviewing progress and outcomes on a quarterly basis
 - Evaluating media coverage and direct engagement through our social media channels
 - Evaluating website analytics
7. We will regularly evaluate the impact of our messaging to learn and adapt on an ongoing basis.

8. The strategy and associated action plans will be live documents and will be updated as necessary to ensure they remain relevant and up to date.

Climate and ecological impact implications

10. There are no direct climate and ecologic implications arising from the strategy. It will raise awareness of the councils' work to tackle the climate emergency and demonstrate they are leading by example in these areas.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this strategy. Any budget required for projects included in the annual action plans will be identified and considered through the councils' project management framework and as part of budget setting.

Legal Implications

12. There are no direct legal implications arising from this strategy. It has been developed in line with the Government's Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity. Any legal implications arising from any projects included in the annual action plan will be considered through the councils' project management framework.

Risks

13. There are risks to the councils' reputations and customer satisfaction if the strategy is not implemented effectively.

Other Implications

14. None

Conclusion

9. A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Strategy that is embedded successfully across the councils will improve customer satisfaction, community engagement and the council's reputations locally and nationally. We would therefore welcome members' feedback on the draft,

Background Papers

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