

Communications Strategy 2008 - 2011

Introduction

The Principles of the Communication Strategy are that:

- Communication is key to the work of Wealden District Council in delivering effective, efficient and value for money services.
- As a Community Leader the Council needs to communicate clearly, consistently and effectively with all of its residents, partners and stakeholders.

The Communications Strategy will:

- Endorse Communication as a priority for Wealden District Council.
- Support the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan.
- Be reflected in the Service Plans across the Authority.
- Provide strong guidance to all staff and elected members.
- Demonstrate our Communications commitment to both the people of Wealden and our partners and stakeholders.

Key Principles

- Good, honest and open, two-way communication is essential for any successful organisation.
- Strong, clear and consistent communication easily understood by the target organisation is essential to the way we provide our services and to establishing a clear, recognisable identity.
- Information should be shared and made available in support of our new corporate objective of putting people first.
- We need to recognise that all our behaviour is a form of communication and reflects on how our customers perceive the Council.
- We want our customers to have a positive experience of the Council.
- All communication - spoken, written and electronic - should be clear, concise, easily understood, timely and up to date.
- All published material should adhere to our accepted corporate style and be in Plain English. It should be instantly recognised as originating from Wealden District Council.

Key Aims

To establish and maintain clear, consistent and regular channels of communication:

- With our residents and customers to create a positive, informed and recognisable identity for the Council.
- With our members and staff to create an environment of trust and loyalty where shared aspirations to excellence are valued and encouraged.
- With members, to support their work as elected representatives and community leaders.
- With our many partners and stakeholders, in order to create effective working partnerships that benefit the local community as a whole.
- With Central Government, neighbouring authorities, the County Council, Town and Parish Councils to share good practice, explore shared service opportunities, and provide the public with high quality, value for money services.

Responsibility for the Communications Strategy

1. Members

- Members have an important role to play in ensuring that the public are aware of the Council, its decisions and the services it provides. Whilst recognising the legitimacy of political challenge and criticism, Members need to be aware of the corporate image of the Council and do all they can to positively promote the Council.
- Members will be responsible for communicating information about the Council to their residents clearly and in a timely manner
- Members will be responsible for driving community understanding of the role of the Council, the services the Council provides and how the community can actively engage with the Council
- The Leader and Cabinet will ensure, as appropriate, that they are available to explain policy and make comments to the public through the media.

2. The Corporate Management Team

- The Chief Executive and the Directors will be responsible for driving the Communications Strategy and will ensure that its principles are applied to all aspects of their work.
- They will communicate their decisions, and the reasons for those decisions, clearly and at the earliest opportunity, to Heads of Service in order that the all staff can be made aware of corporate decisions and their implications.
- They will also ensure that 'communications skills' are included in the annual appraisal for all Heads of Service.
- Directors will hold briefings at least twice a year for all their staff.

3. Heads of Service

- All Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring the Communications Strategy is successfully implemented in their Service area. They will also:
- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of the Communications Strategy, and act in line with it.
- Provide regular feedback to the Head of Policy & Review through the Heads of Service meetings (or generally).
- Encourage staff to express their views and opinions on internal procedures, policies and practices.
- Provide regular feedback on all aspects of the Council and its work to their own Director, so that information flows upwards and downwards.
- Provide information to, and liaise with, elected members within the guidelines of the established protocols.
- Contribute to consultations on the future planning for Communications issues.
- Where relevant, make Communications ability a key result area in staff appraisals.
- Ensure all publications are within the framework of the corporate style guide.
- Promote their service(s) within the boundaries of this communications strategy to ensure that the public knows what services the Council provides and how to access them.

4. Key Communicators

Each Directorate will assess its own commitment to the Communications Strategy and designate a Key Communicator/Information Officer. This person(s) will assume the following duties:

- Planned implementation of all aspects of the Corporate Communications Strategy within the Directorate.
- Liaison with all personnel within the Directorate who have communications needs and requirements and provide help and support, where appropriate, to the same.
- Active participation as a member of the Corporate Communications Group, which will meet on a quarterly basis and be chaired by the Head of Policy & Review.
- Preparation of a yearly schedule outlining key events and issues that will require media/public relations support, inclusion on Wealdnet or inclusion in a Corporate list of potential communications events.
- Responsibility for timely identification of important issues due to appear in Committee papers and agendas to the Corporate Communications Officer, and, where appropriate, implementation of an agreed action plan on such issues.
- Production of the Directorate newsletter(s) (if applicable) and management of the Directorate's web and Intranet pages.
- Assist the Communications Officer in the preparation of suitable responses as required to media enquiries within the Directorate.
- Contribute items of corporate interest for publication via Wealdnet.
- Ensure adherence to the corporate style guide for all external publications.

5. Corporate Communications Officer

- **The Corporate Communications Officer(s) will be responsible for all communications by the Council with the media, and provide professional direction and co-ordination on communication matters to CMT, Heads of Services and Key Communicators. The Officer(s) will also help Cabinet and Members explain Council policy to the public and our partners and stakeholders.**

Appendix B – New Logo

