

# 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 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. 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 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.**

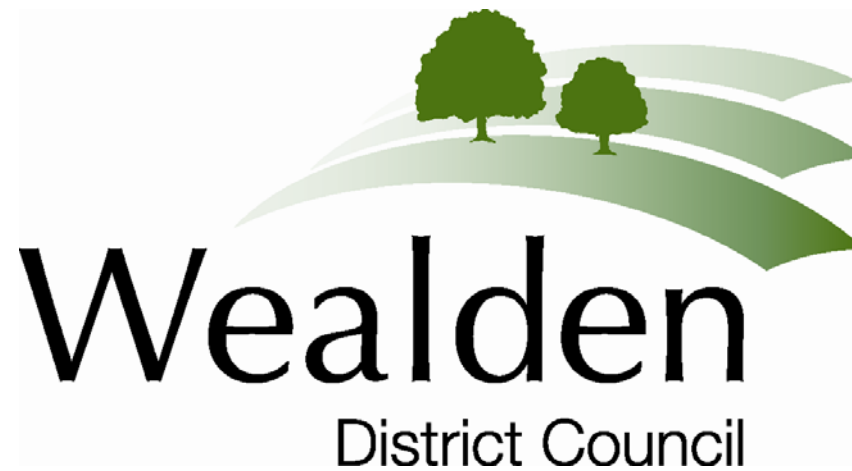
**ACTION PLAN TO DELIVER  
THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

<b>INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
1	Develop and communicate clear guidelines and standards for Heads of Service and line managers on team meeting, including the expected minimum frequency of team meetings and guidance for ensuring consistency of two way corporate communication	Jim van den Bos	January 2008
2	Develop an appropriate Staff suggestions process	David Palmer	April 2008
3	Undertake an annual staff survey on the adequacy and appropriateness of internal communications	Jim van den Bos	June 2008
4	Continue to provide Plain English training for members of staff	Les Newell & Jim van den Bos	Ongoing
5	Ensure the new report writing template is being used for all corporate reports	David Palmer / Nigel Hannam	January 2008
6	Improve the use of Wealdnet as the accepted default mechanism for staff communications	Jim van den Bos	March 2008
7	Introduce a monthly Directors' blog page on Wealdnet	Jim van den Bos	January 2008
8	Develop and introduce a Leader's page on Wealdnet	David Palmer	April 2008
9	Refresh the members' bulletin, including the provision of a monthly briefing note for Members of the District Council to use when briefing Parish Council's	Trevor Scott	April 2008

<b>EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS</b>			
10	Develop and approve a Style Guide	David Palmer, Jim van den Bos & Neil Pickett	January 2008
11	Undertake research for the possible development of a corporate 'strap line'.	David Palmer	July 2008
12	Update all car parking and other signage on all corporate assets	Terry Crone	31 June 2008
13	Ensure all new refuse vehicles are branded with the new identity	Mike Pashler	April 2008
14	Ensure all publications are produced in accordance with the Style Guide	Neil Pickett (supported by Heads of Service)	01 <sup>st</sup> January 2008
15	Apply the new logo to all communications	David Palmer / Neil Pickett (supported by HoS)	01 <sup>st</sup> April 2008
16	All letters, business cards and compliments slips to be produced in accordance with the Style Guide	Neil Pickett	From 01 <sup>st</sup> April 2008 for all new orders for such items
17	Develop a local performance measure to test the success of this communications strategy and report back, as appropriate, to Cabinet	David Palmer	01 <sup>st</sup> January 2009
19	Undertake an annual satisfaction survey with the public	David Palmer	July 2008
20	Achieve Chartermark accreditation	All Heads of Service	July 2008
21	Explore the option to extend the range of media opportunities and	David Palmer	April 2009

	outlets	Jim van den Bos	
22	Review methods for improving district-wide channels of communication	David Palmer Jim van den Bos	March 2009
23	Review and revise the media protocol	David Palmer & Jim van den Bos	April 2008
24	Develop a detailed engagement strategy	David Palmer	December 2008
25	Further member training sessions on working with the media	Trevor Scott & Jim van den Bos	May 2008
26	Deliver an on-line web forum for Town and Parish clerks.	Trevor Scott	January 2008
27	Continue the work of the Communications Group to set in place the mechanisms for delivering the detail of this Communications Strategy	David Palmer	From 01 <sup>st</sup> January 2008
28	Review the Strategy and its effectiveness at least annually	David Palmer	October 2008

Appendix B – New Logo



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