
Corporate Scrutiny

1 October 2025

Report of the Chief Strategy Officer

Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy

Summary

1. The draft corporate communications and engagement strategy outlines how the council will communicate effectively with its core audiences. This includes residents, businesses, partners, community groups and stakeholders.
2. The aim of the strategy is to support the delivery of the council's core commitments, corporate priorities and to ensure inclusivity, accessibility and trust.
3. The strategy builds on the previous work of the service and seeks to ensure there's a clear focus for how it supports the council's work and priorities.

Background

4. In the early part of 2025, an audit review was carried out of the communications function, reporting at the end of May. This outlined a number of key recommendations, including the need for a clear and coherent strategy to shape the authority's communications activity.
5. From May the service has been developing a new strategic approach, linking to industry best practice, and with due regard to existing priorities and policies of the council.
6. During the period we've seen an increase in engagement levels on the council's owned channels, supported by the principles set out within this strategy. The strategy seeks to embed these approaches to continue this trend.
7. The draft strategy brings this work together into an approach that sets out the following:

- a. A consistent approach to how communications is applied and delivered, covering issues such as brand, tone of voice and the application of government communications industry standards.
- b. The focus of communications content, ensuring this is aligned to the council's priorities.
- c. An overview of how the service will deliver this work, with priority areas and an indicative timeline of activity.
- d. Appendices that cover issues such as the media protocol and approach to managing 'owned' social media channels.

Consultation

- 8. A wide range of colleagues have been involved in the development of the draft strategy, including all team members and senior officers.
- 9. External sources referenced during the development and testing included the Local Government Association and the Government Communications Service.

Options

- 10. This Scrutiny review seeks feedback on the draft plan.

Council Plan

- 11. The strategy directly supports the outcomes of the Council Plan and its links to the plan are outlined within the document.

Implications

Financial

- 12. There are no direct financial implications. A coordinated programme of communications will support the activity linked to long-term transformation, designed help to deliver long-term savings. It also includes work to support long-term investment into the city, in partnership with other key organisations.

Human Resources (HR)

- 13. Alongside the remit of this strategy, a coordinated approach for workforce communications is also underway, focusing on how to use

internal communications to directly support the outcomes of the Workforce Development Plan and long-term transformation work.

Equalities

14. The strategy includes actions around enhancing our understanding of seldom heard voices in the city, to ensure we are listening and learning to the whole community. It also includes work around reviewing our style guide to ensure we can deliver accessible communications in different formats.

Legal

15. There are no direct legal implications. The strategy does, however, include reference to the management of our social media channels where content posted by others may bring risks around legal issues such as defamation or contempt of court.

Crime and Disorder

16. The strategy directly seeks to support community cohesion and our civic society, by helping to build trust and positive relationships with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders.

Information Technology (IT)

17. The strategy does not include any direct information technology implications.

Property

18. The strategy does not include any direct property implications.

Risk Management

19. The risks of not having a corporate communications strategy are that the function does not properly support the Council Plan objectives and needs of the organisation, residents, businesses and partners.

Recommendations

20. Members are asked to consider the draft strategy, with particular regard to the following.
 - a. Do the approach and the actions set out within the strategy enable us to achieve our aims, as follows?

- i. To directly support the council's core commitments and priorities
 - ii. To communicate effectively with all the groups listed, in order to deliver the roles of the function as set out in section 3.
 - iii. To be inclusive and accessible in how we do this.
- b. Is the work structured in the most effective way to ensure we deliver against the Council Plan priorities and organisation's objectives?
 - c. Does the proposed approach to branding and tone of voice support the objectives of the strategy?

Reason: To ensure the effective delivery of the communications function.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 19.09.25

Wards Affected:

All ☒

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

- Draft corporate communications and engagement strategy 2025-2027