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**Meeting:** Business Transformation Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 22 February 2010  
**Subject:** Communications Strategy  
**Report of:** Assistant Director, Communications  
**Summary:** To seek input, feedback and approval to the draft strategy.

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Contact Officer: Georgina Stanton, Assistant Director, Communications  
Public/Exempt: Public  
Wards Affected: All  
Function of: Executive/Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

Effective communication with residents, Members, employees and partners is fundamental to the achievement of all of the Council's priorities.

### **Financial:**

The costs of the strategy are expected to be met from existing resources, within Communications and from other budgets where initiatives relate to shared areas of work (e.g. Community Engagement, Human Resources and Sustainable Communities).

Funding for the continuation of News Central is proposed as a growth item in the budget process for 2010/11. Future plans for this publication are therefore dependent upon the Member decision making process on the budget.

### **Legal:**

All Communications activity conducted by the authority and proposed within this plan will be consistent with the statutory code of conduct for local government communications.

### **Risk Management:**

Corporate reputation is widely recognised as an organisational risk in both the private and public sector.

The measures proposed in the communications strategy are primarily motivated by the ambition to enhance customer satisfaction and staff engagement.

Effective delivery of these measures will also contribute to the positive management of the risk of reputational damage.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

Employees of the Council are identified as a priority audience within the strategy which recommends a range of initiatives to enhance staff communication.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

N/A

**Community Safety:**

National and local research demonstrates that community safety is a priority issue for local residents. In recognition of this fact, the communication strategy identifies as an area of priority, the need to raise awareness of the Council's role, with partners, in helping to make Central Bedfordshire a safer, greener and cleaner area.

**Sustainability:**

The communication strategy development is closely aligned to the Web Development strategy. This will lead to enhancements in our on line presence that reduce our dependency on printed literature which will bring both economic and environmental advantages.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That Business Transformation Overview & Scrutiny Committee review the draft strategy and give feedback on:
  - a) The broad objectives, performance targets and approach.
  - b) The core strands of activity.

**Background Information**

1. Following recent public and staff consultation exercises, reported to the January meeting of this Committee, we are now in a position to develop our corporate approach to reputation management, through the development of the Communication Strategy.

**Purpose of the Strategy**

3. The attached strategy proposes overall objectives, performance indicators and priority actions for the authority. It is designed to provide a framework for more detailed implementation plans.
4. The strategy has been developed to give focus to communication activity in the Council in the context of its corporate objectives and high levels of expectation and demand.

**Development of the Strategy**

6. The strategy has been developed by the Communications Team in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Cllr. Richard Stay, and engagement with relevant colleagues across the organisation.

## **Next Steps**

10. Following feedback and amendment from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is anticipated that the strategy will be presented to the Executive for consideration in April 2010.
11. Under the constitutional requirements of the Council, the Communication Strategy forms part of the authority's Policy Framework. As such it will ultimately need to be referred to full Council for approval and adoption as Council policy.

## **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Draft Communication Strategy 2010 - 2012

Appendix B – Local Government Association Reputation Campaign

## **Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

Ipsos MORI research findings – Overview and Scrutiny Committee papers January 2010

What Influences Customer Satisfaction – Research Study published by the Local Government Association – 2005.

**Location of papers:** Priory House, Chicksands