

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24<sup>th</sup> September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Corporate Communications Strategy**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader/Executive Member – Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Anne-Louise Clark, Chief Officer Commercial**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	22/01/2020				12/02/2010	11/03/2020	24/09/2020	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report to present to Council a Corporate Communications Strategy for the period 2020 – 2025. This strategy is aligned to the Council's Commercial Strategy and is designed to support the delivery of the Council's priorities, vision and values.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's Commercial Strategy states that thinking like a commercial organisation means been seen as a trusted brand that is delivering quality services. This Corporate Communications Strategy is designed to deliver that ambition.
- 2.2 The communications landscape has changed dramatically over recent years and is constantly evolving. The era of the internet has changed expectations and it is even more critical that our strategy reflects those expectations. Whilst these changes provide multiple channels through which we can reach our audiences it also brings with it challenges. Digital and social media need to be serviced through a constant flow of information, opinion and education. They provide a tool for two-way communication, however, the speed and frequency of changing content is a challenge, meaning that regulation and our ability to respond is difficult. The impact of COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of social media in keeping citizens informed and up to date in a rapidly changing situation.
- 2.3 In this dynamic environment and due to the pace of change in the public sector the Communications team need to be proactive, provide impetus and anticipate the impact of change for our residents, businesses and visitors. The speed of change means the Communication team need to act as trusted advisors for the Council and individual services so that opportunities are maximised to support a positive reputation, anticipating good news stories and manage reputational

risks. Members of the team will attend all forward planning meetings for Scrutiny Committees and Executive Committees so that agenda items can be reviewed ahead of publication. Advice can be provided to maximise the positive impact of communication opportunities.

- 2.4 The overall objective of the strategy is to deliver excellent, innovative and cost effective two-way communications, building a positive reputation and increasing trust and confidence that the Council is delivering services that meet resident, businesses and visitor's needs. Regular attendance at Directorate Management Team meetings will also ensure that there is early engagement with services on managing communication campaigns and opportunities.
- 2.5 The plan also aims to support elected members and staff by promoting the impact of the Council's vision, priorities and core values.
- 2.6 There are 6 ambitions or themes which will drive the communications delivery led by the Corporate Communications team:
  - Build and maintain a strong reputation.
  - Residents know how we are delivering council priorities.
  - Informed and engaged staff.
  - Ensure marketing campaigns are well planned, targeted and provide value for money.
  - Promote the use of digital communications channels and encourage self-service where appropriate.
  - Make sure residents are informed in advance of and at times of emergency.
- 2.7 Each of the 6 ambitions has a set of actions that make up a programme of work. This programme of work will be scrutinised over the next five years. The actions are detailed in Appendix 1 'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Communications Strategy 2020-2025'. Reporting on the delivery of the work programme will be through Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee quarterly and Corporate Overview Scrutiny on an annual basis.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** That Council considers and agrees the Communications Strategy and associated work programme.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** That Council provides comments and challenges the Communications Strategy and associated work programme.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate

Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The Corporate Communications Strategy supports these objectives by delivering timely and informative communications to residents and staff.

## **5. Implications Against Each Option**

### **5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no direct impact on budgets.

The majority of Council communications uses digital channels. Individual marketing campaigns are often externally funded by partners (eg WRAP).

### **5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Corporate Communications team will work with colleagues and partners to ensure communications plans are delivered in a timely manner.

### **5.3 *Legal***

All internal and external communications activities will take account of any legal issues that may arise from publications and potential challenge.

Communication activities reflect the decision making of the Council and any exempt items will be treated in confidence. Communications relating to individuals will also protect their privacy rights.

### **5.4 *Human Resources***

There are no human resource implications.

## **6. Supporting Evidence**

### **6.1 *Performance Information and Data***

Key measures will include:

- Accurate and balanced media coverage.
- Increased specialist and national media coverage.
- Increasing number of visitors to the Council website.
- More social media followers.
- Staff feel well informed and understand priorities measured by staff survey feedback.

### **6.2 *Expected outcome for the public***

Increased transparency and openness regarding the delivery of public services. Increased levels of trust in the quality of service provision and the use of public funds. Improved access to relevant information delivered in a timely manner utilising multiple channels.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Research will be carried out with residents on a regular basis to check the impact of our external communications activities. Internal communication will also be measured for impact through regular staff engagement activities.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The role of the Council in building the reputation of the area and shaping Blaenau Gwent the place is significant. The Communication Strategy articulates the approach the Council will take to ensure the longer term objectives of the Corporate Plan and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and represented and the impact of the Council's work is promoted positively.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is anticipated that effective and proactive communications will contribute to education and information campaigns designed to influence behaviour. Campaigns relating to littering, recycling and fly tipping and fostering are examples of this however across the life of the Communications Strategy there will be many other areas of behavioural change that will be significant.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council works with other local authorities, partners and Welsh Government on a regular basis to deliver local, regional and national campaigns.

6.7 ***Integration***

Opportunities for promoting cross cutting service impact will be identified as part of the communication campaigns and particularly in relation to integrated marketing. Developing our reputation as a trusted brand will include demonstrating how our services collectively impact in positive ways for our households and businesses.

6.8 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

All communication activities will be screened to ensure there is no adverse impact on protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Communications Strategy will be monitored as part of the Directorate Performance Management arrangements and all activities will be monitored through Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee quarterly. Regular updates on impact will be discussed with the Executive Member.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 - Corporate Communications Strategy 2020-2025