

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting25th November 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Communications Strategy

2. Record of the Decision

From Cabinet held on 25 November 2010.

Cabinet considered a report presenting and seeking approval of a Communications Strategy for the Council.

Members were reminded that the EIT Review of Communications, Consultation and Engagement was carried out by the Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee and approved by Cabinet on 26th November 2009. The Committee concluded that there was a need for better coordination of internal communications functions and a clearer strategic focus in the way Stockton Council communicated.

The development of an overarching communications strategy was vital to providing this clearer strategic focus and was a key deliverable for the new Head of Communications who had been appointed as part of the review's recommendations.

Other progress made following the EIT CCE Review had been the centralisation of the communications unit and the budget to support its activities. There had been a rationalisation of the campaigns and key messages to make the role and function of the council clearer and a greater control on the quality and cost-effectiveness of the information and messages being issued by Stockton Council.

The CCE review involved consultation with a number of groups including: elected members, the Viewpoint Panel, the young people's panel, Council staff and trade unions. Best practice approaches were also taken from other local councils and the IDeA. This strategy sets out how the recommendations of the EIT CCE Review and the views from these consultations were being taken forward by the new centralised communications unit under the leadership of the Head of Communications.

Specifically, the Communications Strategy aims to achieve the following overall outcomes:

- To improve public understanding, support and confidence in the Council providing information about our services, policies, decisions, and delivery achievements.
- To support the development of effective relationships with Council partners, and in particular the business community and national government.
- To support Council Members and Council staff to highlight their role, responsibilities and achievements.
- To encourage participation and involvement in the Council's work and decisions.
- To raise the profile of the Borough to a range of opinion formers, policy-makers, visitors, business investors and potential relocators regionally, nationally and internationally.

A number of principles underpin the Strategy. They were to provide communications that:

- Were open, honest and timely
- Were accessible and appropriate to each audience
- Use language that was easy to understand
- Were cost-effective and efficient
- Support feedback and influence from residents and other audiences
- Use new forms of communications technology

The Communications Strategy sets out how the Council will communicate to the many audiences that have an interest or a say in the council's work. It explains the key messages and communications campaigns the Council will deliver in the year and also the communications channels it will use and the audiences to reach.

The Communications Strategy supports the Council's Consultation Strategy and Engagement Strategy in helping communities to get more involved and have their say in the council's many and varied areas of work.

RESOLVED that the Communications Strategy be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To provide a high-level framework to improving council communications as a key recommendation made in the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Review of Communication, Consultation and Engagement

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 3 December 2010.

Proper Officer
23 December 2010