Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
What do you expect to hear about	What affects us as individuals and also what affects the team we are in	CPA matters; awards received; accolades received by the Council; and, after major changes such as restructures, notices about, e.g. redistribution of roles and relocation of teams.
What would you like to hear about	What affects others corporately and nationally	What affects people, for example structural changes and job security are major concerns at present; what's happening in other Councils; and, organisational / team structure diagrams with linked photos.
How do you want to hear about it	Most important thing to bear in mind is the need for consistency in whatever method / medium is used. Could use the following methods / mediums: • e-mail • note in salary advice note / payslip • intranet (but, the search engine is not good; it is a central source of all necessary info; GIS section in particular is considered very good; contains out of date information (which is actually up to date via the Council website) • internet / Council website (published documents are up to date) • 'find an old timer' – i.e. speak more to people who have been with the Council for a long period of time and who knows many people and how things work, but, increasingly, we work separately these days, so it's not always practical • Postmaster messages ("I don't spam them automatically, I see what it's about first"; could usefully be filtered by service theme or key	It depends on the message. (Need to use the most appropriate method for the message content) Possible methods: • Newsletters • Roadshows and Departmental Displays (e.g. Show and Tell) to identify what they do. The Job Evaluation Roadshows were particularly useful, but communication about JE is now not so good • Intranet • Team meetings (are good for everyone, including shy individuals) • Section meetings (are good because they are scheduled months ahead) • Away days. Especially useful since they offer opportunities to build and develop relationships with others that can subsequently help you in your work. There could usefully be a corporate mandate to have monthly section meetings of a certain length and for

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	topics which everyone would be aware of) • Linked to the above, could use 'voting buttons' on Postmaster to enable recipients to make Postmaster aware that they do / don't want to continue receiving the messages of this type / nature. That said, the message preview / read screen enables users to make informed decisions anyway about whether they read and retain Postmaster messages There is awareness however that addressing each person individually could be manageable. There is an overall feeling that information is 'pushed out' to staff, staff are not sure where to go for the information they require / want.	certain reasons. If a time limit is applied to these meetings corporately, as is currently the case in Finance, individuals can leave if they need to / the meeting over runs. Team and Section meetings are useful since they provide opportunities for rumours and gossip to be aired and resolved.
When do you want to hear about it	As soon as possible!!!	Regularly, but, it will depend on the message (just how frequently it happens)
Do you know how to feedback your views	There are lots of informal routes and managers and officers appear to welcome this. They feel that issues are being resolved when these routes are used. (No examples of such routes were offered.) There are formal routes. Team meetings can, if they are held only on a quarterly basis, however be too late / untimely to tackle issues as they arise. There is however not a standard model for team meetings in terms of a mandate for their frequency, length, agenda items, etc. if there was, it would be helpful.	Feedback views via managers and suggestions box in some sections. However, via both of these routes, it is not always clear if issues raised have been addressed / resolved / ignored… Is there still a corporate suggestions box? (everyone attending did not know if there was)

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	Could use voting buttons on e-mails to enable information recipients to make choices / responses to items being raised. An example was given of changes to annual leave allocation, one person stated that their manager had asked for their views by e-mail, others said they had not been consulted on the matter at all. It is however a corporate matter / issue.	
What do you understand by the term 'senior manager'?	Head of Service and above	The "top dog" – Middle Management Team leader / principal officer upwards
"I am kept informed about matters that affect me"		
What works well	Receive feedback on matters that affect me via postmaster; the intranet; KYIT; managers / team leaders; and, in Resources, staff forums. Team meetings work well since they allow matters to be formally raised and followed up / resolved. With managers, its good to have an open door policy, especially for those who do not want to speak up in front of others. Staff forums are held in Resources and appear to be very well received. No other department / directorate in the Council holds them. The agenda is formed by officers and managers and is valued by officers since the event itself provides people with the opportunity to raise and discuss concerns with those	One to ones between managers and staff. Team/Section meetings Customer Surveys Focus Groups

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	who can best respond to any queries / quash any rumours / reassure those who are concerned about matters.	
What works not so well	Although managers, often have an open door policy, sometimes matters are not resolved, managers' response can be untimely and it is unclear if managers will actually do anything about what is raised (since no formal notes are taken). E-mail groups and databases are not kept updated routinely. Group (e.g. schools') and individual e-mail inboxes are often full, so messages are bounced back. Sometimes don't have time to search for the information if it is not directed at me. Email groups are not always kept up to date so staff can get missed off.	Infrequent meetings can mean colleagues hear about the same subject at different times. This can happen across a number of teams in a department / section and has the effect of being confusing / dispiriting. Can be problems if team meeting etc are infrequent and a lot of information is after the event. Not being kept up to date with current situation on job evaluation.
What can I do to improve the situation	Routinely update e-mail groups / databases and lists Take more responsibility for passing on information to others who they feel should be aware of it and who may not already be aware of it. There is however a chance that this may lead to a 'Chinese whispers' effect - information could be fed back unintentionally inaccurate / inconsistent which may	Ask managers to keep you informed of matters that affect you.

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	have damaging consequences.	
What can we (i.e. 'corporately' or on a 'service group' basis) do to improve the situation	Would like an anonymous means of feeding back, e.g. via e-mail Routinely update e-mail groups / databases and lists Group (e.g. schools') and individual e-mail inboxes are often full, so messages are bounced back. Could usefully encourage better e-mail housekeeping across the Council. Those who do not have access to a PC and e-mail / whom work remotely could receive postmaster type messages by text. Staff could generally be encouraged to take more responsibility for passing on information to others who they feel should be aware of it and who may not already be aware of it. There is however a chance that this may lead to a 'Chinese whispers' effect - information could be fed back unintentionally inaccurate / inconsistent which may have damaging consequences.	More regular team/ section meetings. Weekly bulletin on intranet of staff issues.
"The organisation keeps employees informed" (NB less feedback on this question as many issues covered in the above question)		
What works well	Emails re road closures, severe weather warnings bulletins	KYIT Stockton News (if you live within the Borough / work at the Council)

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
		News Digest e-mails from Communications. Currently available via a public folder in 'Outlook'. (Across the group however, very few people were aware of its existence) Receive minutes of principal officer meetings
What works not so well	Not everyone gets the information	Services don't always report on corporate issues - JE has not been well communicated since the initial decisions were made / throughout the entire process and current structural changes
What can I do to improve the situation	Pass on the information to those who don't get email	Nil response
What can we (i.e. 'corporately' or on a 'service group' basis) do to improve the situation	Send text messages to those staff not on email	Have weekly corporate messages about national and local policy, actions and developments Provide JE updates via intranet on a regular and frequent basis, even if there has been no change since last time ("it's good to know we're not being ignored"). In Libraries, STS is rerun with Branch Managers. It is widely accepted as an effective and practical way to disseminate what is heard by senior managers at STS The intranet could be used. But, at present, some people consider it to be "rubbish"; not easy to use / dip into and out of when you need it; and / or, not

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
		user friendly all round. Produce and distribute a booklet about individual teams in the Council, to help people better understand what each service, and perhaps team, does and why. This used to be done in Finance, but isn't any longer.
"I receive regular feedback on satisfaction levels from users of our services"		
What works well	Customer Feedback Surveys exist and are used throughout the organisation. Complaints and commendations.	Feedback on customer surveys via team and section meetings. If they are timely, they can help boost morale. Staff forums community partnership boards and viewpoint surveys also worked well. Reports of complaints, commendations and comments. But, tend to hear about the complaints first (this is OK though since they need to acted on ASAP)
What works not so well	The findings from Customer Satisfaction Surveys tend to be 'reported up' to managers and senior managers and not always 'reported down' to staff until it is out of date There appears to be more emphasis corporately on 'external facing' rather than 'internal facing' surveys. This can lead some employees to feel unwanted / not listened to. Across the Council there is not a consistently high	In Finance, officers are required to randomly survey managers from across the Council to identify with their levels of customer satisfaction with services received from Finance. It's quite unscientific though since managers that regularly provide negative feedback may be avoided in the next random sample! And, random sampling may not provide representative results. Some customer surveys are not relevant.

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	level of interest in or use of customer satisfaction surveys Sometimes a survey method is used to engage with everyone and it is not always the most appropriate / effective way to secure feedback / consult / engage with people externally in particular. An example was given of housing market renewal areas of the Borough.	
What can I do to improve the situation	Obtain as much feedback as possible and distribute the information.	Undertake anonymous internal telephone based customer surveys on behalf of others in the department to help arrive at more scientific / representative / fair results
What can we (i.e. 'corporately' or on a 'service group' basis) do to improve the situation	To maximise the quality and consistency of all consultation and engagement work, create / establish / provide everyone with access to an in-house, corporate research / engagement team that would provide specialist advice to all departments in the Council about consulting and engaging with the public. This could take the pressure of officers within Departments that do not feel well equipped to do such work by themselves / without guidance or supervision from specialist and experienced research officers.	Keep staff informed of positive feedback – this will boost morale.
"Communication between departments is good in this organisation"		
What works well	Once a link is made with a knowledgeable person, it can be really useful and relied on. Such linkages and relationships are usually developed through project based working with colleagues across the Council. The example was given that such linkages and 'associations' can be very helpful when dealing with	If and where there are relationships / associations / linkages between people

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	confidential information. "Even when formal data sharing agreements exist, some people don't always share data. But, if they know you, they will". Organisational structure charts are useful.	
What works not so well	If individual relationships are not made (for example through working on a project) then there is limited contact. It is not always clear who to contact in another department. A list of who's who is not always helpful, especially as a new starter. It is often better to be able to make one to one contact and develop associations / linkages with individuals.	e-mail and the intranet don't work well for everyone. For example, people will ignore messages they don't want to read Not sure who to contact within individual teams, sections and departments. People don't always answer other phones when unattended.
What can I do to improve the situation	Continue to build links/ relationships with others. Make yourself available.	Return all call and respond to emails promptly.
What can we (i.e. 'corporately' or on a 'service group' basis) do to improve the situation	There needs to be raised awareness of the different roles across the Council. For example, provide more 'a day in the life' type information which is accessible by all to read if they so wish. It would be useful to have a geographical area focused list of who's who. This would for example help in regeneration areas particularly where there is multi-service and multi-partner / agency project working. Support officers who wish to make one to one	Encourage increased use of the 'phone instead of e-mail to help ensure that queries are raised / requests placed appropriately Establish hunt groups within teams and sections to enable all phone calls to be taken easily / without disrupting everyone. And, provide an alternative contact within voicemail message, to further help ensure that calls can be taken.

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	linkages and associations with others across the Council / provide opportunities for staff to do this. For example, could there be a STS type event for those below senior manager level.

Formalise the role of those who are 'known gossips', perhaps with one per Department being recognised as the 'oracle'.

Encourage internal networking | Keep staff informed of changes within departments – perhaps something in KYIT and perhaps a focus on a particular service in each edition.

Have an on line directory with team structure and photos |
| **"Employees are encouraged to make suggestions to improve the way things are done around here"** | | |
| **What works well** | In Regeneration there is a staff suggestions box which the PA to the Head of Regen monitors and the Head of Regen responds to those who make suggestions via this route. Personal feedback in this respect was gratefully received and noted.

Team Meetings and feedback in appraisals were also highlighted. Other examples included email voting and team trials for new ideas | Suggestion boxes / schemes ("…would be good if you got feedback" via team meetings for example). In some sections, items received as suggestions are anonymously placed on office staff notice boards, which is good and useful.

Team meetings generally and one to ones. |
| **What works not so well** | There is no formal incentive to make suggestions about improving the way things are done. Because of this, there appears to be no formal feedback loop showing what suggestions have been accepted before.

Sometimes managers specify a way to do things and they are not always the most practical way for things to be done. It is however not always easy to challenge managers in such instances. | Postmaster messages – there are too many every day! It needs to be better managed.

Staff are not always aware of what has been suggested |

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	Good ideas are not necessarily passed on to other sections/ departments. Not everyone is on email	
What can I do to improve the situation	Use it.	Keep making suggestions at one to ones
What can we (i.e. 'corporately' or on a 'service group' basis) do to improve the situation	Develop a corporate mechanism / framework / systems to enable staff to make suggestions about how to improve the way things are done around here. A series of FAQs on the intranet may be useful perhaps or an electronic suggestions box. It was noted however that any corporate suggestion box would require careful monitoring to ensure that used appropriately. It would be valued if, within the IT feedback questionnaire that is received after a helpdesk call has been resolved, there was space for respondents to make suggestions rather than just tick boxes. Introduce e-mail voting to allow staff to support / otherwise potential ways forward. The example of the change to annual leave arrangements was given again. Encourage new methods to be used / piloted in service groups and then disseminate best practice across the Council as appropriate. Look at what individual services do and roll out the most successful.	Provide access to Postmaster type messages via a regularly updated page on the intranet. In that way, messages could be read if you wanted to read them. Have meetings across different tiers of management within sections to help raise understanding and awareness of what is happening and how best to tackle it. Have round table meetings with Heads of Service, to provide genuine opportunities to discuss and air matters arising / comments and concerns. This happens already in some services and is generally seen as positive: motivating, makes people "feel useful" and is a way to get immediate feedback. Have a section in KYIT on suggestions received and implemented to encourage staff by showing positive outcomes.

Question	Communications Focus Group 1	Communications Focus Group 2
	Could advertise on payslips and have a poster campaign. Whatever is done, it needs to enable timely and relevant resolution of situations / matters arising	
General Closing Comments	Positively: • External communications are done well by the Council. Stockton News is a good example of this. • The Council 'does' communication better than other Councils do. Negatively: • Communication methods can tend to be very service specific, there is no corporate framework or method or approach in place which everyone uses • Generally speaking, internal communications are 'done' less well than external communications • KYIT is not circulated to every member of staff, at least not to each of those attending the meeting. In particular, it seems that teachers and teaching assistants do not receive a copy each, instead a single copy is circulated in the staff room.	Nil response