

corporate communications strategy

2010/12

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1. corporate communications

Corporate communications' primary objective is to improve how well-informed people feel, which helps to increase satisfaction with the council as a whole.

These objectives will be achieved by promotion of the eight corporate priorities, and through the consistent use of a single key message promoting the principle offer of the council's brand.

Corporate communications will improve how well-informed people feel and build reputation, through internal and external marketing campaigns and activities designed to improve understanding about the council, its services and goals.

Communications activity undertaken by corporate communications will be delivered to achieve value-for-money and excellent standards of customer service, and will be researched and evaluated to provide measurable results.

2. summary

This document sets out Portsmouth City Council's overall communications strategy for 2010/12, outlining the main areas of work to be delivered.

It is supported by detailed strategies and action plans for media relations, internal communications, marketing, and social media.

The primary function of corporate communications is to provide a full **marketing communications service** to the council including **media relations, marketing, design services** and **internal communications**.

Corporate communications will deliver work in the four key areas outlined below, with a clear focus on **efficiency** to ensure the organisation gets **best-value** from its investment in communications.

Work delivered by corporate communications will be **evaluated** against **SMART objectives**, with regard to achieving **measurable results**.

Media relations will improve how **well-informed** people feel, raising the council's profile and **reputation** by increasing understanding of the organisation's **priorities**, and providing information about services.

Marketing campaigns and activities, including **social media**, will meet corporate and service communications objectives, and will improve how well-informed people feel, and build **brand recognition** and reputation through consistent use of **corporate identity** and promotion of the council's **priorities**.

Design services will build **brand recognition** and reputation through engaging, **creative** and **innovative, high-quality** marketing materials and council publications which ensure consistent use of the council's **corporate identity**.

Internal communications will engage with staff and increase understanding of the council's **corporate priorities**, so staff feel **well-informed, valued** and **motivated**, and act as **ambassadors** for the organisation.

3. major outputs for 2010/11

media

- increase % of positive/balanced media coverage to 85%
- increase % of national coverage to 20%
- provide two case studies to the LGA media office per month
- increase % of successful news releases to 80%
- increase % of news releases supporting corporate priorities to 90%
- respond to 100% of inaccurate/unfair reporting of the council

marketing

- 100% of communications strategies evaluated against SMART objectives
- forward plan for marketing communications
- marketing communications and media planner for corporate communications
- 10 campaigns that support at least one corporate priority each
- six editions of Flagship
- two editions of Term Times/TT
- four editions of Housetalk
- four editions of Take Care
- A-Z of services
- increase in advertising revenue
- stakeholder database with initial target of 400 contacts
- increase subscribers to the Peek at the Week e-bulletin to 3,000
- official facebook page with 500 'friends'
- official twitter newsfeed - target of 500 'followers'

internal communications

- four editions of Link
- new intraLINK based tool to enable two-way communication
- two internal communications campaigns
- 6 internal communications focus groups
- internal communications staff survey

design services

- increase income generated by design services by 16%
- reduce corporate spend with external design agencies
- achieve 85% excellent/very good satisfaction ratings for design service
- submit two designs for industry standard awards

4. introduction

This strategy sets out how corporate communications will use marketing communications, media relations, internal communications and design, to improve how well-informed people feel, which helps to increase satisfaction with the council as a whole.

As everyone is responsible for communications, corporate communications will aim to improve how well informed people feel, both by delivering high-quality communications, and by providing professional advice/support to ensure everyone has the tools they need to deliver excellent communications.

5. business case

Providing quality, timely and targeted information about the council, its services and priorities, has a proven impact on how satisfied people are with the council as a whole.

MORI research, including the council's residents' survey, shows clear correlation between how well-informed people feel and how satisfied they are with the council overall.¹ In fact, how well informed people feel, and 'perceived value for money' are the most significant factors in driving satisfaction.

*"'Perceived value for money' has the strongest correlation with overall satisfaction. Councils whose residents feel they get good value for money are the most popular and those who score badly on value for money are the least popular. The strongest driver of 'perceived value for money' – and the primary driver of resident satisfaction with councils – is effective information about council services. Councils whose residents feel well-informed about services are the most popular and vice versa."*¹

5.1. reputation campaign

The LGA launched its reputation campaign in 2005, to improve satisfaction with councils through core actions for communications and liveability.

Corporate communications has been delivering the core actions since 2006 and, in that time, the percentage of residents who feel well informed has increased from 47% to 62%, with overall satisfaction up from 51% to 58%.

Although these figures are encouraging, the challenge for corporate communications in 2010/12 will be to build on that success and continue to increase informed and satisfaction ratings despite financial pressures facing the city, the council and the service.

¹ The Key Drivers of Resident Satisfaction with Councils: LGA analysis of BVPI customer satisfaction data for all councils in England

5.2. new reputation campaign

The LGA launched a new reputation campaign for 2010 in May, focusing on a number of key areas that are included in this communications strategy, including:

- improving market research and customer insight
- two-way communications with residents
- developing clear and believable narratives based on organisational objectives, vision and values
- focusing on what's important to residents – currently value for money

6. communications resources

Centralised corporate communications was adopted by the council in 2005 and is considered the optimum structure for communications.²

Corporate communications is made-up of three sections: core marketing and communications, funded corporately; marketing communications projects, funded directly by projects/services; and design services, entirely self-funded.

Resources within the service have diminished since 2007 as a result of restructuring and budget pressures. This has resulted in the loss of a team manager, a communications officer and two communications assistants from the core marketing and communications team, leaving 4.5 full-time equivalent corporate communications officers across internal and external communications.

Any further reductions in resources would have a significant impact on the ability of corporate communications to deliver the corporate communications strategies.

Although communications is centralised, budget for communications activity remains with individual services.

Without centralised funding, corporate communications has limited ability to develop and deliver campaigns that aim specifically to drive reputation. This strategy seeks to address this issue and build reputation by linking service-led campaigns and projects back to corporate priorities.

² LGA and LGComms – New Reputation Project – summary report p10

7. objective

The overall objective of the corporate communications strategy is to improve how well informed people feel, which contributes to how satisfied they are with the council as a whole.

Specifically, this strategy aims to:

- increase % of residents who feel well-informed by the council
- increase % of residents who feel the council provides good value for money

8. strategy

To deliver overall objectives with available resources, and rise to the challenge of financial constraints, the corporate communications strategy for 2010/12 is simple.

Corporate communications will consistently deploy pro-active internal and external communications to improve how well informed people feel, and to protect and enhance the council's reputation, with clear focus on efficiency and value-for-money.

The focus of this strategy is on corporate communications; that is communication about the priorities and services of Portsmouth City Council to the public, staff, other stakeholders and the media.

This overall strategy sets out the key message and themes that will be used to consistently communicate the council's priorities for the city, the audiences, approach to research and evaluation, and the overall strategy in the four key areas: marketing (including use of social media), media relations, design services and internal communications.

The overall strategy is supported by detailed strategies for marketing, social media, media relations, internal communications, and design services.

9. key message

Straplines communicate the principle offer of a brand.

The council has a rather lengthy vision³, and eight corporate priorities⁴, but lacks a single key message or strapline, which affects corporate communications' ability to consistently promote the organisation's principle offer.

During 2010/12, corporate communications will seek to drive reputation through the introduction and consistent use of a single key message, to be used in all appropriate communications.

“delivering quality, value-for-money services for our waterfront city”

The single key message focuses on value for money in response to the financial constraints facing the public sector, internal focus on efficiency and the fact that value for money has the strongest correlation with overall satisfaction⁴ - our measure of reputation.

An approach based around value-for-money is in line with the new LGA reputation project.

10. corporate priorities

In addition to the single key message/strapline, the council has eight corporate priorities, which reflect its aspirations for the city and will form the basis of all communications activity in 2010/12, to increase internal and external understanding of the organisation and its goals.

In particular, marketing campaigns and internal communications will be consistently linked to one or more of the eight priorities, creating a clear focus for communications and a strong narrative for the council.

Although there could be an internal perception that some services do not strictly fit the corporate priorities, this is not the view of corporate communications. For example, a thriving cultural offer regenerates the city. Effective transport and street management makes a significant contribution to both regenerating the city and making Portsmouth cleaner and greener, and so on.

³ Portsmouth City Council Corporate Plan 2008/11

⁴ The Key Drivers of Resident Satisfaction with Councils – LGA analysis of BVPI customer satisfaction data for all council's in England, November 2008, p2

11.audiences

Improved targeting of communications to ensure effective value-for-money communications is central to the council's corporate communications strategy for 2010/12.

As all audience groups are potential advocates for the council and potential influencers of public opinion through word-of-mouth communications, it is essential that everyone the council communicates with understands its goals and priorities, and recognises its achievements.

Two-way communication is essential with all groups, providing information and then listening and taking action on feedback received. Working closely with market research, developing new tools for two-way communication and listening more closely to target audiences will be central.

In addition to its three main audiences, residents, staff and councillors, the council has a number of secondary audiences including partners, community leaders, visitors and businesses.

11.1. residents

As users and potential users of services, residents need clear, timely targeted information so they can access the right services to meet their needs. As voters and council tax payers, residents also need to understand the council's priorities and goals, so they feel able to participate in the democratic process and can hold the organisation to account. Portsmouth residents are also influencers, potential advocates for the council and enthusiastic generators of word-of-mouth communications, which help people feel better informed.

11.2. staff

Those employed by the council need clear, targeted information so they understand and contribute to the council's priorities, are engaged in shaping services, are motivated, and act as ambassadors for the organisation.

11.3. councillors

Councillors need quality, timely, targeted information to ensure they are kept well-informed about the council and its work.

11.4. businesses

As well as needing quality, timely, targeted information about council services and policies that impact on business activities, local businesses are also a key influencers in the city and potential advocates for the council.

11.5. partners and stakeholders

As partners/stakeholders in service delivery in the city, other public sector organisations, voluntary groups and community leaders all need to receive clear, timely information about council services and priorities in order to work together effectively. These organisations and individuals also act as powerful influencers and are potential ambassadors for the council.

12. market research

In 2010/12, corporate communications will improve targeting of communications, using the skills of a strengthened market research function based in the wider service.

Supported by the market research function, corporate communications will use detailed demographic information from segmentation software and commission primary market research to ensure the right tools and messages are used to reach target audiences.

Access to market research will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication, and will enable the service to drive continuous improvements based on the needs of our target audiences.

Intelligence from market research will be used to inform communications strategies in 2010/12.

13. evaluation

Consistent use of evaluation to achieve measureable results is essential to the corporate communications strategy for 2010/12.

All communications strategies will include SMART (specific, measureable, agreed, realistic, timely) objectives that they can be evaluated against, and success will be demonstrated through a quarterly communications evaluation report to strategic directors board.

Corporate communications will also work with the market research function to continuously evaluate its internal and external communications tools, and use the results of evaluation to inform improvements.

14. marketing (including social media)

In recognition of resource issues and the need to drive continuous improvement while simultaneously making efficiencies, in 2010/12 corporate communications will focus its marketing activity on its core objective – to improve the reputation of the council.

14.1. project-based communications

In order to do this, the team will move to a project-based approach to communications, based on robust forward planning, to ensure resources are allocated where they will have greatest impact how well informed people feel and will achieve measureable objectives for the organisation.

14.2. key message and corporate priorities

Using the council's eight corporate priorities and its key message, corporate communications will ensure all marketing activity is linked to the council's goals for the city and is used to tell a consistent story about the organisation.

14.3. efficiency

In 2010/12, corporate communications will improve the efficiency of the service by developing and delivering improved templates, toolkits and training to help everyone to deliver quality communications. This will enable corporate communications to focus its resources where potential impact on reputation is greatest, ensuring the council gets best value from its professional support.

14.4. influence

In addition to focusing on better targeting of the council's primary audiences (residents, staff and councillors), corporate communications will improve communications with key stakeholders in the city. A stakeholder database will be developed, with a target of 400 contacts from across the city, including partners, voluntary organisations, community groups and businesses.

14.5. two-way communications

Working with colleagues in the city helpdesk and web team, corporate communications will implement a social media strategy designed to encourage two-way communication with residents and enable the council to access a new set of communications tools while safeguarding reputation.

14.6. market research and evaluation

Identified as a key area for improvement in 2009/10, a market research function has now been developed in the wider service and will play a critical role in driving improvements to marketing communications in 2010/12. Recognising the imperative for marketing communications to produce measurable outcomes against corporate and service objectives, further improvements to evaluation will be made in 2010/12 and challenging targets will be achieved.

related documents

- marketing communications strategy 2010/12
- social media strategy 2010/11

15. media relations

15.1. key message and corporate priorities

Corporate communications will take a positive, proactive approach to all media relations, consistently focusing on promotion of the council's single key message and corporate priorities.

15.2. duty media officer

Recognising the significance of media relations in driving improvements to how well-informed people feel, corporate communications will ensure media management is prioritised by introducing a duty media officer system and a media forward planning calendar.

15.3. developing a media culture

Corporate communications will take a proactive approach to developing a media culture at the city council, promoting the importance of effective media relations and the need to consider reputation when making decisions.

15.4. market research

To drive improvements to efficiency, media relations will be supported by robust market research, including a fresh analysis of how residents get information about the council, to ensure resources are targeted for maximum impact.

15.5. monitoring and evaluation

Corporate communications will continue to improve media monitoring by developing a cost-effective solution for broadcast media, and will develop evaluation through the introduction of advertising equivalent values.

related documents

- media relations strategy 2010/12

16. internal communications

The LGA reputation campaign includes good internal communications as one of five core communications actions, recognising the role of internal communications in ensuring staff feel well-informed, valued and motivated, and act as ambassadors for the organisation.

16.1. focus on corporate priorities

Internal communications will create a clear narrative for the council through a consistent and proactive focus on corporate priorities, helping staff to feel well informed and building their understanding of what the organisation is trying to achieve and how their role fits. New channels will be developed to celebrate success, so contributions are perceived as valued. Increased visibility of the chief executive and senior officers will be used to give credibility to messages.

16.2. better links between internal and external communications

In order to ensure staff are better informed, links between internal and external communications will be improved by including council staff as a key target audience in all external communications strategies and to communicate council news to staff as well as the media.

16.3. two-way communications

A range of two-way communications tools will be developed to enable staff to feedback to the top of the organisation, ask questions, make suggestions, and feel their contributions are valued. A new intraLINK tool is being scoped that could, subject to costs, enable staff to communicate and transact with each other, enable internal communications to focus on delivering objectives rather than administering intraLINK.

16.4. efficiency

Two-way communications will play a key role in an internal communications campaign designed to meet objectives of the efficiency programme, encouraging staff to innovate and recognising their contributions.

16.5. managers as key communicators

Recognising the need to drive internal communications to improve reputation, corporate communications will aim to help managers understand the importance of internal communications and encourage them to act as key communicators. A set of internal communications tools will be developed to improve communications within teams and services.

16.6. evaluation

In line with the corporate communications strategy, there will be a clear focus on evaluation, including staff surveys and focus groups, to drive improvement. Internal communications will be evaluated against SMART objectives.

related documents

- internal communications strategy 2010/12

17. design services

17.1. brand and corporate identity

In 2010/12, corporate communications will continue to build the council's brand and corporate identity, and will ensure brand is consistently linked to council services.

Consistently linking brand to all council services will drive reputation by improving how well informed people feel and by ensuring the council receives the credit for delivering popular services that are valued by residents.

Consistently linking brand to council services will also drive reputation by helping residents to understand the value the council delivers for their council tax. This is important because, according to MORI research, 'perceived value for money' is one of the main drivers of satisfaction.

In 2010, the design service will review and revise the council's corporate identity standards to incorporate branding of social media.

17.2. value for money

The design service is entirely self-funded, saving the council money by charging around half the rates of commercial graphic design agencies.

In 2009/10, the design service saved the council around £112K⁷ in external graphic design costs and there is potential for further savings. Figures for external spend on graphic design are not yet available for 2009/10, but in 2008/9 an estimated £161K⁸ was spent with external agencies.

In 2010/11, the design service will continue to work to make efficiencies for the council by actively promoting the in-house service and by demonstrating that the in-house offer is more cost effective and can provide creative and engaging value for money design.

⁷ - figure based on design service charging 50% less than an external graphic design agency

⁸ figure based on spend with external agencies on cost codes 4231, 4701, 4771 and 5401

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