

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD
(SPECIAL)**

21ST FEBRUARY 2018

**Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services
– Karen Jones**

Matter for Decision

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
STRATEGY**

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval of the Communications and Community Relations Strategy covering the period March 2018 to March 2020.

Background

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 introduced a new duty upon the Council to carry out sustainable development. Within the sustainable development principle there is a requirement to involve people in the work that the Council carries out. This Strategy has been designed to support the Council in responding to this new legislation, but also to make the Council's collective communications and community relations efforts more consistent, effective and relevant. The Strategy has also been designed to support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan approved by Council in September 2017.

Financial Impact

The Strategy has been designed to operate within the existing budget cash limits, but it also seeks to reduce unnecessary expenditure on communications and community relations activity (the refreshment of the corporate identity is an example where there will be several thousands of pounds of cost savings that will accrue over time) whilst also contributing to the need to generate new income streams. The

development of a strategic approach to advertising and sponsorship is a key feature within the proposed approach.

Equality Impact Assessment

This Strategy specifically aims to ensure that all sections of the community are able to access Council communications and that all sections of the community, including people who share protected characteristics are able to engage with the Council and have their voices heard.

Workforce Impacts

The Strategy acknowledges that training and development will need to be arranged for elected members and certain staff groups if the aim and objectives of the Strategy are to be realised. The cost of meeting these training and development needs can be accommodated within the existing budget cash limits.

Legal Powers

The Council has a duty to secure the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its residents and must embrace the sustainable development principle in everything that it does. This Strategy will help the Council to meet these new duties.

Risk Management

There are a number of risks to highlight:

- Risk that without a consistent and effective approach to communications and community relations the Council's reputation and its standing with local residents will deteriorate;
- Risk that without a shared understanding by elected Members and staff of the Council's priorities and programmes that those priorities and programmes will not be delivered/not be delivered to the required standard or in the desired timescale;
- Risk that without a clear direction the corporate communications and marketing team will not be value for money; and

- Risk that without effective engagement approaches, opportunities to receive and test proposals with the community will not be available leading to a lack of community support or the loss of opportunity to enhance proposals for change.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for public consultation on this item.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Board approves the Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 and commends the Strategy to Council for adoption.

Officer Reporting:

Mrs K Jones, Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services, tel: 01639 763284 or e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Corporate Communication and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020

List of Background Papers

Please see footnotes in the Strategy document.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020

Introduction

This Strategy is designed to set out how the Council's Communications and Community Relations functions will be transformed to support the delivery of the Council's priorities, whilst responding to significant changes in the communications and marketing industry and wider social and technological change.

The Strategy supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan. It will be regularly reviewed and its aim and objectives will be implemented through annual action plans.

This Strategy sets a framework and gives direction to all media, on-line, marketing, publications, public relations, community relations and communications activity delivered by or on behalf of the Council - both internal and external, not just by the Corporate Communications Team.

It is set against a back drop of reducing resources and increasing expectations.

Context

In this challenging and changing environment of local government it is more important than ever that regular, reliable and accurate information about the Council and its work is provided to our workforce, residents of the county borough, council tax payers, users of our services and our wider partners.

We know that effective communications and engagement with residents is a key driver to improving trust and confidence in councils. ¹It is also at the heart of good customer service with effective, meaningful public involvement, engagement and consultation central to the Council's community leadership role.

It is also crucial to ensuring that the Council's overarching purpose and strategy - including our challenges and ambitions, priorities, principles and values - as

¹ (Ipsos Social Research Institute and Ipsos Mori 2008)
(<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/publication/1970-01/sri-one-world-many-places-june-2010.pdf>)

articulated in our Corporate Plan – is better understood by everyone and at the heart of everything we say and do.

In designing our Communications and Community Relations function, we need to be informed by the way the wider industry has been and continues to be transformed by changing media consumption habits, linked to the growth in digital technology. In

²Wales, take-up of fixed broadband has increased from 63% in 2012 to 78% in 2017. At least 74% of people now use a smart phone - up from 38% in 2012.

Digital methods of communication:

- are instant;
- can deliver content to specific audiences so that messages can now be much more targeted; and
- have greatly increased the potential reach of campaigns.

Digital technology has also changed the way in which people make decisions and form opinions – people are now increasingly influenced by their peers via social media, forums, comparison websites etc.

All of this has contributed to a sharp decline in circulation figures and titles for traditional print media. At a local level, the ³Audit Bureau of Circulations Ltd. (ABC) figures showed that:

- the circulation for the South Wales Evening Post had dropped from an average of 30,582 in 2013 to an average of 21,031 copies in 2016; and
- the circulation for the Western Mail had dropped from an average of 22,854 in 2013 to an average of 15,697 copies in 2016.

Conversely, we are also aware that for some people in our community, digital channels are not the right channels for them, or simply not their preference. Therefore, whilst we will be prioritising an extension of our digital presence, we will also need to ensure that our stakeholders can continue to have a choice of ways in which they interact with us.

The Council's Communications and Community Relations function must respond to the changes in our environment. The function needs to combine creativity with technology – using imaginative narratives and visuals to attract and hold attention; and adopt software, data and analytics to create and share content and evaluate its effectiveness. It must also recognise and respond to those people who can only access communications and engagement through

³ (Ofcom Communications Market Report Wales 2017)

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2017/wales>

(From <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-39065024>)

more traditional routes. As in the Digital by Choice Strategy, whilst the Council aims to design digital channels that are so easy and appealing to use that people will naturally choose these channels as their preference, we will also need to make available other channels where people – for a variety of important reasons – will still need to access services face to face, by letter or by telephone or other means.

Aims and Objectives

Aim: To build trust and confidence in the Council through effective two-way communications and engagement with our residents, workforce, customers, partners and other stakeholders.

Objectives:

1. To ensure the residents of the county borough, partners and wider stakeholders are supportive of and have a consistent understanding of the Council's vision and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2017-2022;
2. To ensure the Council's workforce are supportive of and have a consistent understanding of the Council's vision and priorities;
3. To deliver a corporate Communications and Community Relations service which is value for money;
4. To increase the income generated through sponsorship and advertising; and
5. To strengthen the Council's approach to consultation and engagement so that people can express their views and opinions about the Council's work and feel that their voices are listened to.

Principles

Our communications activities will be:

- Lawful;
- Cost-effective;
- Objective;
- Even-handed;
- Appropriate to the audience/issue;
- Have regard to equality, diversity and the status of the Welsh language in Wales;

- Be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity;
- Be two-way;
- Be based on insight and evidence wherever possible; and
- Be in line with agreed corporate branding and guidelines.

Audiences

Our main audiences are:

- Residents and customers;
- Businesses and investors;
- The community and voluntary sector;
- Media – local, regional, national and trade as well as on-line;
- Visitors;
- Special Interest Groups;
- Workforce and their representatives;
- Elected Members;
- Suppliers;
- MPs and AMs;
- Welsh Government and UK Government; and
- Government agencies.

Key Corporate Messages

The tone and sentiment of our new Corporate Plan has changed. There is more emphasis on building on our strengths and everything we have to be proud of in our county borough, rather than focusing on deficits and things that are not so good.

Our vision for the county borough is spelt out in the Corporate Plan:

- ❖ *“We want our county borough to be a place where everyone has an equal chance to get on in life – a place where people want to live, learn and work and bring up their family.*
- ❖ *We want our beautiful natural environment, and our rich cultural and industrial heritage to be appreciated and protected for many future generations to enjoy.*
- ❖ *We also want to pursue new and existing opportunities for economic growth so we can sustain our diverse communities for many years to come.”*

Moving forward, our core narrative will be about a diverse county borough with its share of challenges to address, but also rich in opportunity.

Our Strategy

We will embrace a different operating model which will see the communications and community relations function of the Council moving from a largely reactive function to one which is proactive (Supports objective 1)

- a) We will upskill our communications and community relations workforce so that our activities are informed by insight, data and evidence of what works;
- b) We will establish a campaign-based approach to the delivery of the Council’s priority programmes and ensure there are stronger links between the communications and community relations function and the Forward Work Programmes of the various committees of the Council;
- c) We will extend and promote the use of digital channels, embrace a multi-media approach to the way we work and introduce an on-line news-desk which brings together in one place all of the key content we have issued, whilst still catering for those who depend on other channels of communication; and
- d) We will monitor coverage of the Council’s activities by others and issue rebuttals and offer comments where this is considered necessary.

We will increase the reach of our communications (Supports objective 1)

- a) We will ensure we have a detailed understanding of the audience reached by our “owned” media channels (those arrangements which we can ourselves design and deliver e.g. our website, social media accounts) and ensure that communications are appropriately tailored for those different audiences; and
- b) We will work with our workforce, elected members and partner agencies to identify other opportunities to amplify our communications through their channels of communications and where appropriate we will offer reciprocal arrangements.

We will make it easier for our residents, partners and wider stakeholders to give us feedback on our work and to contribute to policy and service change (Supports objective 5)

- a) We will embrace a rights-based approach to our communications and community relations work;
- b) We will create a coherent corporate framework to govern consultation, engagement, participation and involvement activities across the Council; and
- c) We will provide training and development opportunities for staff to ensure there is a consistent implementation of the framework.

We will strengthen the Council’s brand identity (supports objectives 1 and 2)

- a) We will provide guidance for the workforce so that the Council’s identity is consistently portrayed in all communications activities;
- b) We will ensure there are up to date and relevant protocols in place to support people identified as Council spokespersons;
- c) We will ensure there are clear policies in place for our workforce to guide them in their communications practice – eg social media policies; accessible information guidelines; Welsh Language guidelines etc; and
- d) We will refresh the corporate identity guidelines to ensure this is fit for a digital age and that we reduce cost wherever possible.

We will strengthen employee communications (Supports objective 2)

- a) We will develop the Chief Executive’s staff briefing sessions;
- b) Develop the monthly employee newsletter (In the Loop);
- c) Develop the Employee News content on the intranet;
- d) Develop the Q and A service on the intranet into a staff ideas portal;

- e) Provide services that enable employee voices to be captured – including employee surveys, staff panels and other related activities;
- f) Support the NPT Staff Health and Well-being Group through the delivery of a Service Level Agreement;
- g) Identify other innovations in employee communications to further enhance our approach

**We will refocus our communications and community relations corporate service to ensure it effectively supports the delivery of this Strategy
(Supports objective 3)**

- a) We will focus the team's efforts on promoting and developing the Council's corporate narrative and in delivering corporate and priority service campaigns, the detail of which will be agreed with the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on an annual basis;
- b) Set the strategic framework for delivering the community relations and communications functions across the Council;
- c) Provide the core corporate narrative to ensure that our ambitions as articulated in our Corporate Plan are better understood by everyone and at the heart of everything we say and do;
- d) Deliver specialist communications and community relations support for the agreed set of corporate activities and campaigns;
- e) We will introduce a business partnering approach, ensuring we have a clear understanding of what is emerging from service operations and the communications activities needed to support those;
- f) Manage requests for interview and provide briefing and support to those people who are asked to be Council spokespersons;
- g) Provide an emergency and crisis management media and communications response capability, working alongside other agencies to ensure the right information is provided in a timely manner and that the Council's reputation is protected;
- h) Provide advice to elected Members and officers on the codes of practice that apply to local government communications activities
- i) Provide advice to elected Members and officers on the duties contained within various pieces of legislation and codes of practice that apply to consultation, engagement and equalities activities;
- j) Fulfil an enabling role, providing the necessary tools, policies, guidance and training for officers to carry out their own service communications;

- k) Work with our procurement team to ensure there are appropriate commissioning arrangements in place to support communications and consultation activities;
- l) Continuously review and research emerging industry best practice and identify how the Council might take full benefits from adopting and adapting new approaches; and

**We will increase income generated through advertising and sponsorship
(Supports objective 4)**

- a) We will establish a policy that creates a framework for all sponsorship and advertising activity across the Council;
- b) We will establish a policy that creates a framework for all corporate publications across the Council; and
- c) We will develop advertising and sponsorship opportunities across the functions, facilities and assets that are managed by the corporate communications team, starting with website, social media and other “owned” channels of communication and engagement.

Measuring Impact

Evaluation allows us to assess our performance in delivering on our objectives and helps us improve going forward. The measurement and evaluation of our communications and marketing activity needs to be outcome focused, robust and consistent. We will seek to improve evaluation capability and standards in line with industry best practice.

There is little benchmarking information available at the time of preparing this Strategy. Therefore, a priority action over the remainder of 2017/18 will be to agree a set of performance metrics and then, in 2018/19 put in place the means to report on them.

APPENDIX 2

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – 2018-2020

Aim: To build trust and confidence in the Council through effective two-way communications and engagement with our residents, workforce, customers, partners and other stakeholders

Objective	Action	Tasks	Lead Officer	17/18	18/19	19/20
				Year actions to commence		
To ensure the residents of the county borough, partners and wider stakeholders are supportive of and have a consistent understanding of the Council's vision and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2017-2022;	We will embrace a different operating model which will see the communications function of the Council moving from a largely reactive function to one which is proactive	a) We will upskill our communications workforce so that our activities are informed by insight, data and evidence of what works;	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		b) We will establish a campaign-based approach to the delivery of the Council's priority programmes and	Strategic Marketing Advisor			

		ensure there are stronger links between the communications function and the Forward Work Programmes of the various committees of the Council;				
		c) We will extend and prioritise the use of digital channels, embrace a multi-media approach to the way we work and introduce an on-line newsdesk which brings together in one place all of the key content we have issued, whilst still catering for those who depend on other channels of communication;	Press and Public Relations Officer			
		e) We will monitor coverage of the Council's activities by others and issue rebuttals and offer comments where this is considered necessary;	Press and Public Relations Officer			
	We will increase the reach of our communications	a) We will ensure we have a detailed understanding of the audience reached by our "owned" media channels (those	Digital Team Leader			

		arrangements which we can ourselves design and deliver ego our website, social media accounts) and ensure that communications are appropriately tailored for those different audiences;				
		b) We will work with our workforce, elected members and partner agencies to identify other opportunities to amplify our communications through their channels of communications and where appropriate we will offer reciprocal arrangements.	Strategic Communications Officer			
	We will strengthen the Council's brand identity	a) We will provide guidance for the workforce so that the Council's identity is consistently portrayed in all communications activities;	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		b) We will ensure there are up to date and relevant protocols in place to support people identified as Council spokespersons	Strategic Communications Officer			

		c) We will ensure there are clear policies in place for our workforce to guide them in their communications practice – eg social media policies; accessible information guidelines; Welsh Language guidelines etc; and	Strategic Communications Advisor			
		d) We will refresh the corporate identity guidelines to ensure this is fit for a digital age and that we reduce cost wherever possible.	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
To ensure the Council's workforce are supportive of and have a consistent understanding of the Council's vision and priorities;	We will strengthen employee communications	a) We will develop the Chief Executive's staff briefing sessions	Strategic Communications Officer			
		b) Develop the monthly employee newsletter (In the Loop);	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			

		c) Develop the Employee News content on the intranet;	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		d) Develop the Q and A service on the intranet into a staff ideas portal;	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		e) Provide services that enable employee voices to be captured – including employee surveys, staff panels and other related activities;	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		f) Support the NPT Staff Health and Well-being Group through the delivery of a Service Level Agreement;	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		g) Identify other innovations in employee communications that further develop our approach	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			

To deliver a corporate communications and community relations service which is value for money	We will refocus our communications and marketing corporate service to ensure it effectively supports the delivery of this Strategy	a) We will focus the team's efforts on promoting and developing the Council's corporate narrative and in delivering corporate and priority service campaigns, the detail of which will be agreed with the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on an annual basis	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		b) Set the strategic framework for delivering the marketing and communications functions across the Council;	Strategic Marketing Advisor and Strategic Communications Officer			
		c) Provide the core corporate narrative to ensure that our ambitions as articulated in our Corporate Plan are better understood by everyone and at the heart of everything we say and do	Strategic Marketing Advisor and Strategic Communications Officer			

		d) Deliver specialist communications and marketing support for the agreed set of corporate activities and campaigns	Strategic Marketing Advisor and Strategic Communications Officer			
		e) We will introduce a business partnering approach, ensuring we have a clear understanding of what is emerging from service operations and the communications activities needed to support those;	Business partners			
		f) Manage requests for interview and provide briefing and support to those people who are asked to be Council spokespersons	Press and Public Relations Officer			
		g) Provide an emergency and crisis management media and communications response capability, working alongside other agencies to ensure the	Strategic Communications Officer			

		right information is provided in a timely manner and that the Council's reputation is protected;				
		h) Provide advice to elected Members and officers on the codes of practice that apply to local government communications activities	Strategic Communications Officer			
		i) Provide advice to elected Members and officers on the duties contained within various pieces of legislation and codes of practice that apply to consultation, engagement and equalities activities;	Strategic Communications Officer and Equalities Officer			
		j) Fulfil an enabling role, providing the necessary tools, policies, guidance and training for officers to carry out their own service communications	Strategic Marketing Advisor and Strategic Communications Officer			
		k) Work with our procurement team to ensure there are appropriate commissioning arrangements in	Strategic Marketing Officer			

		place to support communications and consultation activities;				
		l) Continuously review and research emerging industry best practice and identify how the Council might take full benefits from adopting and adapting new approaches; and	Strategic Communications Officer and Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		m) Provide necessary training for staff and elected members to fulfil their communications roles	Strategic Communications Officer			
To increase the income generated through sponsorship and advertising; and	4. To increase the income generated through sponsorship and advertising; and	a) We will establish a policy that creates a framework for all sponsorship and advertising activity across the Council;	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		b) We will establish a policy that creates a framework for all corporate publications across the Council; and	Strategic Marketing Advisor			
		c) We will develop advertising and sponsorship opportunities across the functions, facilities and assets	Strategic Marketing Advisor			

		that are managed by the corporate communications team, starting with website, social media and other “owned” channels of communication and engagement				
To strengthen the Council’s approach to consultation and engagement so that people can express their views and opinions about the Council’s work and feel that their voices are listened to.	We will make it easier for our residents, partners and wider stakeholders to give us feedback on our work and to contribute to policy and service change	a) We will embrace a rights-based approach to our communications work;	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		b) We will create a coherent corporate framework to govern consultation, engagement participation and involvement activities across the Council; and	Corporate Engagement and Employee Communications Officer			
		c) We will provide training and development opportunities for staff to ensure there is a	Corporate Engagement and Employee			

		consistent implementation of the framework	Communications Officer			
Strategy Implementation	We will ensure there is robust management of the Strategy	We will establish a coherent set of performance metrics and reporting framework	Strategic Communications Officer			
		We will carry out a full review of this strategy to identify scope for further improvement	Strategic Communications officer and Corporate Marketing Advisor			

Neath Port Talbot media landscape

Following the purchase in October 2015 of newspaper group Local World, the two main target print titles for the Council - The South Wales Evening Post (SWEP) and The Western Mail - are now both under the ownership of Trinity Mirror. A number of redundancies at the Western Mail included several journalists with which the Council's Communications Team were in regular contact both on a proactive and reactive basis. This has meant that the Council now has a smaller number of print journalists to target with proactive news content and also that there is an increased likelihood of news stories both positive and negative, being shared between the two titles.

In addition, the merger in March 2017 of the SWEP website with Wales Online has meant that there is no longer an established dedicated news website for the NPT/Swansea/Llanelli area. Stories appearing in either newspaper are now, if indeed chosen to feature online, part of a website focussed on news from across Wales. Wales Online has recently launched social media channels branded as 'Neath Port Talbot Online' which are dedicated to their coverage of stories in the county borough.

The Ammanford-based South Wales Guardian, whilst focussed on Carmarthenshire news, does provide some opportunity for print and web coverage of stories relevant to the Swansea and Amman Valleys.

Bay TV Swansea is a Swansea-based television station which was launched in July 2016 and is available via Freeview and Virgin. Its output includes daily local news bulletins which provide an opportunity to showcase good news stories. Whilst some areas of the county borough are unable to receive the channel, their content is also streamed and shared via Facebook and YouTube.

Local radio stations providing local news coverage include The Wave, Swansea Sound and Swansea Bay Radio, with national stations Heart Wales and Nation Radio covering larger all-Wales stories.

BBC Wales provides TV, radio and online local news coverage via their patch reporters covering the NPT and Swansea area.

ITV Wales provides TV and online coverage via their patch reporter covering the NPT and Swansea area.

Swansea Bay Business Life, Business News Wales, and Wales Business Insider regularly feature business-related stories issued by the communications team.

Golwg 360 is a Welsh-language news website

FYI Neath is a 'hyperlocal' website for Neath which enables written content and images to be uploaded directly.

West Wales Chronicle is a regional news website.

APPENDIX 4

NPTCBC – owned channels

- Press releases
- Internal poster distribution to civic buildings, Celtic Leisure venues, community centres, libraries
- TV information screens civic buildings
- Web
- Intranet
- Staff portal
- Twitter (what about schools etc.)
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Notice boards
- Payslip messages
- Council tax leaflet
- E-bulletins
- Corporate Staff newsletter
- Bus station screens

Partner/other organisation networks we can tap into:

ABMU

- TV information screens
- Twitter - @ABMhealth
- Facebook - ABM University Health Board
- YouTube

NPTCVS

- Web
- Voluntary Voice newsletter
- Membership Mail out (x 500)
- Twitter - @NPTCVS
- Facebook - NPTCVS

Trade Unions

- Newsletter
- Web
- Twitter Unison - @UNISONNPT

- Twitter GMB - @GMBNPTCBC
- Facebook Unison - NPT Unison
- Facebook GMB - GMB_nptcbc

Tai Tarian (9500 tenants)

- Quarterly Tenant Newsletter – The Grapevine
- Website
- Trailer Community Events
- Notice boards in Sheltered Housing for the over 55s (18 occupied schemes).
- Staff Intranet
- Fortnightly Staff E bulletin
- Quarterly Staff Newsletter – The Insider (400 staff)
- Staff notice boards
- Twitter - @TaiTarian
- Facebook - Tai Tarian

