

Newcastle City Council

Communication and Marketing Strategy

- Changing the way we work
- Making the most of our assets
- Celebrating success and valuing staff
- Listening, not just talking
- Focusing on priorities
- Defining the Newcastle offer

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1. Executive summary

This is a Communication and Marketing Strategy for Newcastle City Council for the next three and a half financial years – through to March 2010.

The starting point for this strategy is the Council's established vision and values.

Thereafter, the strategy looks at the Council's context. This covers both internal and external communication and marketing – and looks both at current activity across the authority, as well as areas of as-yet unmet demand – such as the need to support strategic priorities including reducing teenage conceptions, and increasing environmental sustainability.

Next, the document interprets the vision and values into a range of strategic aims specific to communication and marketing:

- To raise understanding and awareness of the Council, its services, the role of Councillors, and the democratic process
- To build and maintain an effective two-way dialogue between the Council and the full range of individuals and groups across the city and beyond
- To influence behaviour, deliver 'public education' messages, and to contribute to positive outcomes
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the City Council by promoting effective communication between the local authority and partner agencies and key decision makers
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council itself through supporting effective internal communications
- To work with partners to market the city more widely

The strategy goes on to state very clearly the ethics, standards and principles that the Council states, as a matter of policy, that it will adopt in its communication and marketing work, including honesty, accuracy and timeliness; openness and transparency; listening to people, not just talking at them; accessibility; and, a recognition that the effectiveness of communications is not measured by volume, and that an overload of communication can blunt or obscure an important message.

Importantly, in a large and complex organisation like the Council, the strategy goes on to offer definitions of what communication and marketing actually means – and where it fits in with a whole range of Council activity, such as telephony, call centres (like Envirocall), and customer reception facilities; website, intranet and schools extranet; training and development; outreach and community development activity; consultation and audience research work, and so on. The strategy – and its accompanying programme of activity – are designed specifically to both complement and help illustrate the links to other Council strategies – such as the newly-developed engagement strategy.

Throughout, the strategy aims to use a solid evidence base, and to be smart in targeting specific audiences through the most relevant and impactful communication and

marketing media. Sections 6 and 7 of the strategy address these audience identification and methods and media issues, with audiences broken down into these categories:

- **General public** – segmented by demographic characteristics (age; gender; race/ethnicity; disability; sexuality; class/socio-economic group etc.); location/geography; specific constituency of interest; individual preferences and needs, such as residents and tourists. Children and young people often have specialist communication and marketing preferences and needs.
- **Businesses**
- **Users/customers of Council services** (and potential users)
- **Partner agencies**
- **Key decision makers, inspectorates, influencers and opinion formers**
- **Internal audiences**

and media grouped as

- **Traditional free media** – mainstream, local, national, foreign, niche and specialist print and broadcast
- **New media** – websites, digital TV, kiosks, mobile technology, text messaging etc.
- **Paid advertising and marketing activity**
- **Public meetings and events**
- **Personal interaction**
- **Outreach initiatives**
- **Third-party comment**
- **Joint initiatives with other agencies** e.g. placing articles in others' publications; mutual links from websites; joint campaigns, initiatives and launches

It's important that the strategy doesn't just list a series of current and historic activities on the one hand, and a list of new demands on the other, without addressing the key challenge of matching scarce resources to genuine organisational priorities. The strategy addresses these tensions in section 8, recognising that existing communication activity needs to be considered against new and under-resourced demands including:

- **equality and diversity**
- **internal communications**
- **intranet**
- **website**
- **horizon-scanning** capacity and an **early-warning** system for dynamic risks, and improving **media monitoring**;
- **reputation management**
- clarifying the respective **roles of councillors and council officers in media relations**;
- **the relationship between the Council and key local media** partners;
- contributing more fully to key internal work such as the **children's transformation programme, community safety/Section 17 work, and the regeneration strategy**;

- managing resources within the Councils **Medium Term Financial Plan**, producing meaningful and sustainable **service level agreements**, and managing communications for the **current budget process** itself;
- contributing to upcoming **inspections**;
- integrating communications effectively into **service plans** about to be developed for next year;
- lining up impending communication and **consultation activity**;
- contributing to key forthcoming and current campaigns for example on **recruitment, the environment, the casino/convention centre** and (through partnerships) on **teenage conception, smoking cessation, and Newcastle Science City**; and
- contributing, through the Newcastle Partnership, to the development of the **Local Area Agreement** and the **Sustainable Community Strategy**.

From all this evidence and context, the strategy goes on to focus on six key approaches

- Changing the way we work
- Making the most of our assets
- Celebrating success and valuing staff
- Listening, not just talking
- Focusing on priorities
- Defining the Newcastle offer

and four themes

- Not losing sight of the positive, whilst needing to deal with the negatives pretty sharpish
- Going with what works – but recognising that if we want to see big impacts on outcomes, we need sometimes to use our imagination and take some risks
- Getting off the back foot – shifting the balance from reactive work to a forward-planned grid of activity
- Joining up what we're doing – looking like we are one Council, and playing nicely with our partners

Finally the strategy recognises that the investment of Council Tax payers' money in communication and marketing activity needs to be subject to proper governance, accountability and performance management. The governance arrangements for specific initiatives are detailed in a column in the appended programme of activity.

The strategy is supplemented by two key appendices – the programme of activity (detailed for the first six months until April 07, and in outline for the following three years) – and also by details of an activity analysis in seven key areas of Council activity

- Design
- Print
- Photography
- Web design
- Public relations and marketing

- Advertising
- Translation and interpretation

to establish:

- Patterns of spend
- Consistency
- Quality, appropriateness and fitness-for-purpose
- Value for money
- Relation to established Council priorities

and to make recommendations for future commissioning/delivery models that:

- Ensure compliance with financial and procurement regulations
- Appropriately prioritise scarce resources
- Promote accessibility
- Maximise value-for-money
- Deliver a consistently, quality product or service
- Deliver savings and efficiencies required by the Medium Term Financial Plan.

2. Introduction

Newcastle City Council has established clearly its vision and values:

Our Vision

We want to create a vibrant, inclusive, safe, sustainable and modern European city.
We will:

- build on the heritage, cultural and economic strengths of Newcastle and the sense of identity and civic pride of our people.
- improve the quality of life for our people in our communities and play a leading role in the sustainable growth and prosperity of the region

Our objectives to deliver the vision

We will:

- provide services that are accessible and of consistently good quality, with an emphasis on their effective and efficient delivery, and on value for money, while keeping council tax as low as possible.
- improve educational attainment and support all citizens to fulfill their aspirations and potential, encourage everyone to learn, develop skills and build self-esteem.
- build and support safe and clean neighbourhoods and communities while managing the environment effectively and sustainably.
- create an improved quality of life by working with people and partners, devolving decision-making and empowering individuals and communities to contribute and influence services.
- encourage enterprise, investment, innovation and jobs through a welcoming, forward looking and can-do approach and by building a positive relationship with business and with Europe.
- create an attractive city for people today and tomorrow, with a welcoming natural and built environment and an accessible transport system.
- work to improve all housing, health and well-being across the city and promote inclusion and equality, and seek to help those individuals and communities most in need.

Our Values (the way we will work for you in pursuing these aims)

- Be an open, accountable, listening, responsive council
- Put the customer and citizen at the heart of everything we do, delivering services in a caring and sensitive manner
- Manage resources in a coordinated way and with an emphasis upon sustainability
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively
- See the diversity of our people and communities as a strength
- Focus upon continuous improvement in the pursuit of excellence, setting and achieving clear priorities and embracing new opportunities

To effectively deliver every aspect of this vision and these values, the Council recognises the importance of communicating effectively with a range of individuals, groups, agencies and organisations. Effective promotion is, for example, an essential element of promoting accessibility to Council services; of recruiting and retaining staff; of selling what the city has to offer; of positively influencing behaviour; and, of putting Newcastle's case persuasively to the people who make the big decisions that affect the city's future.

This communication and marketing strategy sets out the approach the Council will adopt to underpin these broader goals. Accepting that whilst communications can be viewed as much as an art as it is a science, the strategy aims specifically to use a solid base of evidence for measuring impact, effectiveness and value-for-money. Although there is a significant impetus for change, such change nonetheless requires evidence to ensure buy-in, and avoid any suspicion of 'change for change's sake'.

With scarce resources, there is no place in the Council for 'vanity' communication activity – glossy publications or expensive events designed simply to make the organisation feel good. To justify continued investment, communication activity must contribute tangibly to improving outcomes.

If the process of improving the Council's communication and marketing activity can be represented as a journey, this strategy aims first to take a clear view as to where the Council wants to be (considering competing demands, assessing options and agreeing priorities) – being clear about where it starts this journey from (establishing current practice and effectiveness) – then exploring how best to get there (tactical choices) – and covering how to establish if it is on the right road during the journey and when it has got there (performance management arrangements and success criteria). This journey is underpinned by a set of clearly-stated 'rules of the road' to be followed (ethics, standards and principles governing communication and marketing activity).

Internal and external credibility, buy-in and engagement is essential to the success of this strategy – changing patterns of activity (and spend) requires a conscious shift in behaviour, attitude and confidence.

For the Council's new communication and marketing strategy to be a success, it requires the engagement not only of senior management, councillors and specialist staff – but of all approximately 15,000 employees, most of whom communicate to the public on a daily basis. The strategy aims to strike a reasonable, clear balance between what activities the organisation can and should manage strategically and centrally, and those functions that are a matter of local management responsibility and discretion (with suitable central coordination, support, and training as appropriate).

This strategy focuses on areas where the Council can impact on outcomes through its communication and marketing activity – particularly to meet corporate priorities. In so doing, it aims to recognise and deliver against the limited number of key statutory requirements. For example, to publish certain categories of information to service users.

There has been a vital contribution to the development of this strategy – from scratch – by members, senior management, directorate management teams, specialist staff, peers in partner organisations, and colleagues from across the Council. As well as a

range of casual meetings and discussions, this has included an officer project board, as well as the creation of a time-limited scrutiny working group, and consultation with directorate management teams, and the Council's communication champions group.

Following this input, this strategy proposes a two-stage approach – some early, signal changes (based on existing evidence and available quick-wins) accompanied at the same time by a systematic evidence-gathering and planning phase. Followed by a second, sustained phase of activity, introducing more significant (evidence-based) change, including consideration of more radical structural change across the organisation.

The first phase is scheduled to last around six months (with some changes happening immediately, and others requiring a slightly-longer lead-in period, for example to allow for the necessary consultation on staff restructuring).

The second phase, is planned to last for three years (with the bulk of changes adopted in the first 12 months, but a recognition that some shifts in public perception, attitude and behaviour will take longer to fully realise).

To make this strategy tangible, it is therefore supported by an accompanying three-and-a-half-year programme of activity (from mid 2006-2007 to end 2009-2010) – detailing the individual projects and pieces of work necessary to deliver the strategy. So far, this programme is populated in detail for just the first six months – both with some early imperatives, some quick-wins justifiable from evidence currently available, and with further activity designed to properly inform and generate the subsequent three years' work.

This programme gives an outline of activity in communication, analysis and planning, including resource implications, 'smart' targets, success criteria, lead responsibility, and performance measurement arrangements. The programme of activity can and should necessarily be revised from time to time during those three-and-a-half years, in light of progress, changing circumstances, and emerging priorities, without necessarily requiring a fundamental review of the strategy itself.

Any activity has resource implications. This strategy is explicitly constructed on the working assumption that resources required will be consistent with the authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (particularly the tougher constraints for back-office and corporate activity, so as to concentrate resources on key service priorities). For absolute clarity, this means that there are no growth proposals or underlying growth assumptions (except for some potential invest-to-save initiatives identified, for which individual business cases would be developed and advanced for consideration in due course). More than that, this strategy seeks to maximise value for money, whilst improving quality and consistency, and focusing resources on key priorities through effective coordination.

For a large and complex organisation like the Council, with around 15,000 staff working across many different kinds of business, it is important that there is clarity about responsibility. In communication and marketing terms, there does need to be greater clarity about what aspects will be managed and delivered by the organisation centrally

and corporately, e.g. media relations, what is a matter for local responsibility but with proactive corporate support or coordination through toolkits, training, guidance, standard presentations etc. such as delivery of team briefings written centrally but made relevant to each team and delivered by local management, and what is principally a matter for local responsibility, with only very limited central support on request, e.g. writing letters to individual clients.

Credibility of the central communication and marketing function needs to be enhanced, and the role of this team reinforced throughout the organisation, whilst similarly reinforcing in managers and staff the understanding that effective communication is everybody's responsibility in their daily work. Where corporate standards are developed and adopted, for example around accessibility guidance to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements, there needs to be greater compliance.

At present, where a manager in the organisation needs specialist advice in either accountancy or the law, then there is a common understanding that in the first instance, they would consult the City Treasurer's department or the Legal Services section respectively – and only if the issue required some specialist expertise unavailable there, would the organisation bring in an accountancy firm, a firm of solicitors, or a barrister. However, at present when a manager feels the need for specialist communication service such as PR, marketing or graphic design, some simply go straight to the market and hire a local firm. This shows through in the overall (lack of) consistency in the Council's product and messages, and this needs to be addressed by this strategy.

3. Communication and marketing strategic aims

- To raise understanding and awareness of the Council, its services, the role of Councillors, and the democratic process
- To build and maintain an effective two-way dialogue between the Council and the full range of individuals and groups across the city and beyond
- To influence behaviour, deliver 'public education' messages, and to contribute to positive outcomes
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the City Council by promoting effective communication between the authority and partner agencies and key decision makers
- To support the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council itself through supporting effective internal communications
- To work with partners to market the city more widely

4. Ethics, standards and principles governing communication and marketing activity

The Council makes the following explicit commitments:

- The Council shall in its communications be **honest, accurate** and **timely**
- The Council recognises the **legitimate public interest** in a range of its work and undertakes to be as **open and transparent** as possible
- The Council undertakes to **listen to people** as well as to tell them things, and therefore undertakes to provide suitable opportunities for feedback and dialogue in its communication activity – and then to take on board what people have said in taking decisions and shaping future services
- The Council undertakes to communicate and make information as **accessible** as possible, particularly to ‘hard to hear’ groups – such as people with disabilities, and to users of other languages
- The Council understands that it has a mandate to offer **community leadership**, and the **ability to influence individual behaviour** (such as increasing recycling and reducing smoking) through effective communication activity, and undertakes to **act responsibly** in these roles
- The Council shall wherever possible use **clear and understandable language**, avoiding jargon
- **Communication overload** can blunt a message, so the Council will be as focused, concise and brief as possible
- The Council recognises the danger of overloading people with messages, and undertakes to be selective in **targeting communications effectively**. Similarly, the Council recognises that just because an identifiable group of people share one or more characteristics (such as where they live, their age, or their employment status), they are not homogenous – this does not mean that their needs, preferences and opinions are identifiable – and that this must be reflected in communication activity.
- The Council shall operate within **legal, statutory and institutional standards**, codified principally in the Newcastle Charter, and set out in other documents such as the **Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity**
- The Council in particular recognises its duties under the **Access to Information Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Act, and the Disability Discrimination Act**
- Council **staff shall act professionally and remain politically neutral** in carrying out their work on behalf of the Council
- The Council recognises a **leading role for all 78 elected members as advocates for their constituents and active members of their communities** and thus their important role in communicating with the people of the city
- The Council recognises the importance of clear communication, therefore undertakes to **invest in effective communication**, whilst gaining maximum **value for money**, assessing and benchmarking against external standards and using **evidence of what works** and what **forms of communication end users most trust, value and prefer**
- The Council shall fully exploit the potential of **new media**, whilst at the same time, recognising that not everybody has access to the internet or other e-channels,

and therefore undertakes as a rule to make every document published electronically also **available in more traditional formats**

- The Council recognises the value of internal communications, and commits to **ensuring that its staff have the necessary information** so they can each contribute fully, do their jobs effectively and develop in their careers
- The Council recognises that **communication is a routine part of the business of every staff member**, and that as well as an organisational responsibility for effective communication, that there is also **an individual responsibility on each employee to communicate effectively**

5. Inter-relation with other relevant policies, strategies, work-programmes, and service plans

Neither **communication** nor **marketing** are clearly defined or uniformly understood concepts within the City Council – with considerable overlaps and inter-relationships to other policies, strategies, and work-programmes.

For the development of this strategy, a working definition of communication has been adopted as:

“The process of taking all the information about what the Council does, working out who wants and needs to know what (even bad news), and then finding the right way to get them that information. More than this – it is about guiding how the whole Council does its business not just to make sure that we tell people what they want to know (in writing, or by talking to them), but so that we are also ready, willing and able to listen to what they want to say to us – and act on it. Effective communication recognises that one size does not fit all, and that similar messages may require different media for different audiences.”

and similarly, marketing has been defined as

“The use and adaptation of specialist communication tools developed in the commercial sector to persuade customers to spend their money on a particular good or service by first understanding and even stimulating demand. In a public-sector context, particularly where the Council is often a monopoly supplier of services and choice is often limited, marketing is about a process – through a dialogue, by first identifying who the audience or user group is; finding out what they think, feel or want; using this knowledge to help shape and inform the services that are offered by the Council; and then communicating what is available to the potential users through the most appropriate mechanisms. As well as promoting accessibility to services, effective public-sector marketing is about influencing choice and changing behaviour.”

There is a whole range of different communication and marketing-related activity currently and historically in place across the Council.

The Council’s existing Communication and Marketing Unit, for example, has largely been focused historically on **media relations**; production of the bi-monthly **free residents’ newsletter**, Citylife; the administration of some **translation** and **interpretation** facilities for other Council services; and the provision of some marketing, advertising, design and publishing advice.

Activity supporting **internal communication** has previously been developed by a combination of staff from the Communication and Marketing Unit, the Organisational Development division, and the Chief Executive’s office – with individual teams, departments and directorates developing their own more localised internal communications on an ad-hoc basis.

The Council's **website** was recently relaunched following work by a partnership of staff from each directorate, driven by Government requirements and structures, led by colleagues from the I.T. (information technology) division, and each directorate remains responsible for its various **web and intranet** pages (with very little central coordination of content at present, and the technical infrastructure again provided by I.T. colleagues), whilst the Education department has led on the development of the **schools extranet**.

Individual **schools' communication needs** e.g. parents' newsletters, school prospectuses etc, have been carried out within or commissioned externally by those schools (although the Education Directorate and the Communication and Marketing Unit continue to provide specialist support, such as with media relations).

Telephony is managed principally within City Service, although specific hotlines and contact centres are managed in other directorates e.g. **Envirocall** in Neighbourhood Services. **Front-desk** and **customer reception** facilities managed variously according to the occupation of each Council building, with Customer Services leading on **Customer Service Centres** (sometimes jointly with the NHS).

Corporate **customer care standards** are managed principally by the Customer Services section, albeit with different standards applied in different Council services.

Training in various aspects of communication activity has been developed within specific programmes by the Training and Development section, with some **specialist media training** arranged by the Communication and Marketing Unit.

The City's **Information Service** is managed within libraries, the **Children's Information Service** managed within education, and the **Tourist Information Centres** within the regeneration directorate – each providing specialist information services to specific audiences variously through different office bases, publications, websites and telephone help-lines.

Public affairs activity, for example lobbying government, has been led by Councillors, and by the Chief Executive and other senior officers (such as the City Treasurer around negotiations of the grant settlement) – with a small, specialist **external affairs function** (with the organisation's principal **overseas links**) reporting into the Assistant Chief Executive.

Councillors play a leading **public representative and leadership** role, particularly through the historic **offices of the Lord Mayor and Sheriff**.

Political communications (such as political press releases and party newsletters) are of course undertaken by political parties and individual Councillors rather than by Council officers.

Outreach activity has been carried out by a range of staff across the Council on an issue-by-issue basis, with particular activity from the Community Development Unit. Creation of the Council's recently-drafted **engagement strategy** has been led by colleagues from the Social Policy team and Customer Services.

Individual service marketing has been led either within different directorates and teams or centrally, with some individual communication, design and marketing staff only recently transferred to the Communication and Marketing Unit (and others remaining attached to individual service units, such as the City Hall). Other parts of the Council – and other partnerships of which the Council is a leading member – have contracted out their **marketing** needs directly to the private sector, with a large number of different agencies employed separately by different parts of the Council and our partnerships.

Consultation and audience research activity is provided within the Council by different specialists and teams (in the Chief Executive's Office, in Neighbourhood Services, in the Customer Services section of City Service, and in the Planning Division of the Regeneration Directorate) as well as on a one-off basis in other parts of the authority.

Knowledge management is a concept being developed by a multi-disciplinary team led by colleagues from the Chief Executive's Office and City Service.

Design, print purchasing and photography needs have been met in a range of ways – with the bulk provided by the in-house team of Newcastle Document Services (NDS), with a smaller proportion provided by other smaller teams and individuals in different sections, or by being directly contracted out. **Recruitment advertising** is managed within Organisational Development sometimes using an external agency, with most other **advertising** (including statutory notices) being placed centrally through the Communication and Marketing Unit.

Development of **ward and local communications** has been led by colleagues within Neighbourhood services, with active support from the Business Development Unit, the Communication and Marketing Unit, and I.T. Newcastle.

Event management has largely been managed within the Council by whichever is the lead department from their general resources, although there is a small specialist event management function within Regeneration – and other teams have been assembled as necessary for specific projects such as the Tall Ships race.

Destination marketing (including conference and convention promotion) has been carried out for the City in recent years (to great critical acclaim) by the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) as has specific marketing and PR activity around the Culture Ten programme (with some other cultural activity promotion remaining within the Council) – and the Council has invested significantly in this work through NGI funding. **Tourism promotion** has been led on a regional basis by the regional development agency One NorthEast (ONE), and is now being developed on a Tyne and Wear sub-regional basis by a ONE-funded partnership, operated within NGI.

Promotion of the city for inward investment and job creation purposes has again been a function principally of One NorthEast – supporting activity within the Council has been more ad-hoc, with initiatives led from within Regeneration. The City Council has led on major initiatives with heavy communication aspects, such as the bid for a major casino and convention centre, and is a leading partner in the development of Newcastle Science City (including investing significantly in its communication activity).

In addition to all of this activity, the Council has a large range of **major programmes, projects and strategies** all either in place or currently under development – most of which have an identified communication strand (and accompanying range of activity) – ranging from the Children’s Transformation programme, to the Section 17/Community Safety project, to the Regeneration Strategy. Different **forthcoming inspections** – ranging from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection, to the Equalities Standard for Local Government inspection, to the Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection again each have communication strands. **Service plans** within the Council also have specific identified communication needs identified. Within these streams of work, separately, and often in partnership, the Council is also involved in a series of **campaigns** to shift public behaviour – such as reducing littering, increasing recycling, reducing teenage conceptions, reducing obesity, and helping people give up smoking. Many of these initiatives are in partnerships with other local agencies.

For the sake of completion and clarity, for each and every one of these different areas of activity, this strategy seeks to either explicitly address the relevant communication and marketing activity demands, or indicate where else those matters are addressed.

6. Audience Identification

There is a range of ways of differentiating between audiences, although in seeking common characteristics, individuals will fall into several categories simultaneously. It's also worth keeping in mind that groups of people sharing common characteristics are not entirely homogenous – as some will not share information needs, preferences and prejudices with the assumed group norm, i.e. 'one size does not fit all'. Although not an exclusive list, the principal audiences recognised by this strategy are:

- **General public** – segmented by demographic characteristics (age; gender; race and ethnicity; disability; sexuality; class/socio-economic group etc.); location/geography; specific constituency of interest; individual preferences and needs, such as residents and tourists. Children and young people often have specialist communication and marketing preferences and needs.
- **Businesses**
- **Users and customers of Council services** (and potential users)
- **Partner agencies**
- **Key decision makers, inspectorates, influencers and opinion formers**
- **Internal audiences**

Considerable relevant, detailed demographic intelligence is already available, which helps inform the understanding of who these audiences are – and what are their communication wants, needs and preferences. Monitoring and analysing these demographic characteristics, changes and trends again helps to inform this strategy.

7. Methods and Media

There is a wide range of communication channels open to the Council, including:

- **Traditional free media** – mainstream, local, national, foreign, niche and specialist print and broadcast
- **New media** – websites, digital TV, kiosks, mobile technology, text messaging etc.
- **Paid advertising and marketing activity**
- **Public meetings and events**
- **Personal interaction**
- **Outreach initiatives**
- **Third-party comment**
- **Joint initiatives with other agencies** for example placing articles in others' publications; mutual links from websites; joint campaigns, initiatives and launches

Details of traditional media, their readerships and their characteristics are already readily available. Details of other methods of getting the message across – such as developing a panel of influential third-party commentators to support the city's case more widely – need to be explored and developed further. Considerations of value for money and organisational reputation need to be balanced against potential impact on outcomes, and a solid framework of risk assessment in place for considering what for the city are more novel and sometimes contentious methods such as viral marketing. Processes for exploring and developing these less traditional media and methods are proposed in the programme of activity.

8. Managing demand, whilst getting the supply right

Clear and pressing early demands for change in communication, marketing and related activity include:

- raising the profile of the Council's **equality and diversity** strategy and integrating its ethos into routine communication activity;
- improving **internal communications**;
- redeveloping the **intranet**;
- developing the **website's** transactional capacity and piloting portal technology;
- developing both a **horizon-scanning** capacity and an **early-warning** system for dynamic risks, and improving **media monitoring**;
- proactively handling **reputational risks** identified;
- clarifying the respective **roles of councillors and council officers in media relations**;
- developing the **relationship between the Council and key local media partners**;
- contributing more fully to key internal work such as the **children's transformation programme, community safety/Section 17 work, and the regeneration strategy**;
- managing resources within the Councils **Medium Term Financial Plan**, producing meaningful and sustainable **service level agreements**, and managing communications for the **current budget process** itself;
- contributing to upcoming **inspections**;
- integrating communications effectively into **service plans** about to be developed for next year;
- lining up impending communication and **consultation activity**;
- contributing to key forthcoming/current campaigns for example on **recruitment, the environment, the casino/convention centre** and (through partnerships) on **teenage conception, smoking cessation, and Newcastle Science City**;
- and contributing, through the Newcastle Partnership, to the development of the **Local Area Agreement** and the **Sustainable Community Strategy**.

This early pattern of demand will be supplemented in the first six months of the three-and-a-half-year Programme of Activity – particularly as new **service plans** are developed throughout the Council. This will aid in significantly shifting the balance between reactive and proactive communication activity towards the latter, and allow for effective forward planning in the second, three-year phase of this strategy.

A systematic and objective analysis of demand and supply in seven key areas of communication activity is underway – addressing **design, print, photography, web design, PR and marketing activity, advertising, and translation and interpretation services**. This analysis will produce a series of recommendations, and present a solid information base on which the organisation can make sustainable changes not only in managing the **demand** across the Council for such activity (e.g. how many different logos; how many different websites; how many different letterheads; and, how many different door-to-door residents' magazines does one Council need, how many can we afford, and which pattern of spend best meets our priorities and delivers key outcomes?) but also its **supply** (how many different in-house and external commercial PR and

marketing agencies; how many in-house centralised or devolved designers, and external commercial design firms; and how many in-house specialists and external advertising companies does the Council need to deliver these prioritised outcomes?).

Further such analyses of other key areas of communication and related activity (including **media relations and media monitoring; information services; consultation and audience research; destination marketing and tourism; and economic and employment initiative marketing activities such as within Science City**) are proposed in the second wave of actions in the programme of activity – linking as appropriate into new, existing and emerging strategies and governance frameworks such as the knowledge management work, the new engagement strategy, and the Council’s relations with NGI and the Science City secretariat).

It is important to stress that these pieces of work do not assume that the appropriate outcome will be a fundamental change in practice, management, or staffing – or that either in-house services (centralised or devolved) are inherently either better or worse than external provision (or indeed even that there is necessarily a uniform best solution even within any one area of activity). This objectivity needs to be reflected in the course of these analyses so that the organisation can have suitable confidence in the evidence base they provide, on which different options can be developed for decision.

Staff engagement throughout the Council is key, as is enhanced partnership working – and although clearly any resulting change proposals that potentially affect staffing will be subject to normal consultation arrangements in line with Council policy – this strategy also encourages the positive engagement of staff affected (i.e. both specialist staff and internal clients) in the development of options, at an early stage, to allow them to input their experience and ideas, and where possible to shape and be part of the proposed solution.)

9. Long-term strategic approach and proposed early changes

Both phases of this strategy (the first six months, and the successive three years) are informed by the following approaches:

- Changing the way we work
- Making the most of our assets
- Celebrating success and valuing staff
- Listening, not just talking
- Focusing on priorities
- Defining the Newcastle offer

Within these six headings, the strategy revolves around four themes:

- Not losing sight of the positive, whilst needing to deal with the negatives pretty sharpish
- Going with what works – but recognising that if we want to see big impacts on outcomes, we need sometimes to use our imagination and take some risks
- Getting off the back foot – shifting the balance from reactive work to a forward-planned grid of activity
- Joining up what we're doing – looking like we are one Council, and playing nicely with our partners

Changing the way we work

This strategic approach is characterised by structural changes and new initiatives, e.g.:

In the short term (by April 2007)

- introducing a new raft of internal communication tools
- refocusing our relationship with the media
- reorganising central communication staffing
- piloting new marketing tools to build credibility and demonstrate an impact on outcomes (e.g. forthcoming environmental campaign)
- building an evidence base through the 7-area activity analysis
- developing a menu of communication and marketing tools

and in the longer term (phase 2, 2007-2010)

- developing a range of toolkits and training support (and potentially online support systems) for specific communication and marketing purposes for use throughout the organisation (e.g. presentation skills, writing for the web etc.)
- developing options and promoting proposals to refocus communication and marketing activity to better join up the vast range of related activity (sketched out in section 4) in the 7 areas covered by the first activity analysis
- further activity analyses for other areas of communication and related activity
- shifting the balance from reactive communication activity to proactive through more integral inclusion of communication activities into service plans
- better embedding communication into forward service planning
- using innovative marketing tools

Making the most of our assets

Making best use of the Council's staff, estate, partnerships, fleet, reputation and exposure, for example:

Short term:

- Identifying, developing and supporting internal communication champions
- Targeting presentation skills at key individual spokespeople
- Pilot programmes to better exploit the Council's physical assets
- Early partnership initiatives to build credibility and demonstrate success (e.g. joint teenage conception campaign)
- Initiating the next phase of e-government (further website development, re-launching the intranet, and exploring other new technology)

Longer term:

- Better training, developing, equipping and informing all 15,000+ staff
- Utilising the Council's physical presence (by using buildings, mail, vehicle fleet etc.)
- Developing and equipping members
- Capitalising on (and where necessary, fundamentally renegotiating) the Council's partnerships and relationships with other public sector agencies, the private, voluntary and community sectors to share resources towards common aims

Celebrating success and valuing staff

Shifting the tone in Council communications, influencing the organisation's culture, and focusing on promoting its reputation, for example:

Short-term

- Pilot initiative involving staff in recruitment campaign
- Roll-out of senior management visibility activities agreed

Longer-term

- Development of new 'valuing staff' strand of organisational culture initiative – with a leading role played by both individual staff members and their representatives

Listening, not just talking

Making sure that the Council's internal and external communication activity is two-way – and more effectively joining up communication and marketing activity with consultation and audience research to provide an evidence base by which gauge the impact on outcomes and prioritise activity, for example:

Short-term

- Building budget communication strategy around evidence base of resident perceptions and priorities
- Revising team brief system to include more systematic feedback loops

Longer-term

- integrating forward plan of consultation activity into activity grid for communication and marketing activity – linking into governance arrangements for new Engagement Board

Focusing on priorities

Identifying priorities, and shifting resources through activities such as:

Short term:

- Restructuring the communication and marketing team

Longer term:

- Debating priorities within the Council, so as to identify the range of support available and to be dedicated

- Developing focused, specialised support for key priority areas, and developing templates, toolkits and materials to support lower priority areas of Council activity

Defining the offer

Working with internal and external partners to clarify what the Council (for instance as an employer) and the city itself has to offer to particular key audience groups whose engagement will help deliver corporate priorities (e.g. potential inward investors) – and integrating this intelligence not only into promotional activities, but more fundamentally into core business processes.

Short term:

- Explore pilot initiative (e.g. jointly with the universities and college around student recruitment and retention – or with local employers around a welcome pack for out-of-area key workers)

Longer term:

- Further researching, establishing and developing the detailed concept of the 'Newcastle offer' – what Newcastle has to offer to different key groups (residents, visitors, students, inward investors etc.) and the most effective ways of changing our business to give them what they want

10. Performance management

Effective media and public affairs monitoring is vital to the ongoing effectiveness of this strategy – as are satisfaction levels, penetration measures and impact analyses of individual products, publications, events and campaigns. Other measures can include dip-sampling of compliance with established requirements – e.g. plain English, house style, accessibility requirements etc.

Quantitative and qualitative measures need to be built routinely into communication and marketing activity up front – and often, this will involve the investment of a proportion of whatever resources are available for that project (e.g. typically 5-10% of the budget of a major advertising campaign is spent on measuring its impact) – as without this effective measure, future spend has little evidence base for the effectiveness of an approach.

Governance arrangements for various of the initiatives and approaches addressed in this strategy are already in place (e.g. for the engagement strategy; for the project board overseeing the introduction of a new e-mail system; and for the Children's Services Transformation Programme), and overlapping or duplicative arrangements are explicitly to be avoided. The governance arrangements – and opportunities for shared learning – for all other activities addressed in the accompanying Programme of Activity are through the normal line management routes identified.

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