



## Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Sue Harper  
Strategic Partnerships & Projects Manager  
Date: Thursday, 9th September 2010  
Open

### Communications Quarterly Update

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The report provides a quarterly update on the Council's Communication programme.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Communications Team (Media and Marketing) consists of 2 part time officers totalling 44 hours per week, Monday to Friday inclusive.
- 2.2 The Communications Team have integrated the recently launched (May 2010) Local Government Communications 'Reputation Campaign' recommendations into their programme of work. Feedback from Local Authorities across the UK clearly shows that if residents feel well communicated with, they are more likely to be satisfied with the Council.
- 2.3 Following the suspension of Newsywe, the Council's newsletter for residents in spring 2008 achieving savings of £19,260, regular communication with residents relies on publicity campaigns and press stories. To gain media coverage we are of course at the mercy of news editors and editorial space is increasingly squeezed as local newspapers move to web based editions. During June, July and until mid Aug 48 releases were issued to local media, and an average of 90% plus gain media coverage.
- 2.4 The Council's weekly internal communication newsletter Wyred Weekly launched in December 2009 is becoming increasingly valued and popular with employees and members. (See Appendix 1 – Wyred Weekly 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010).
- 2.5 An employee satisfaction survey was carried out in July 2009 and repeated in August 2010. The 2009 survey had a 50% response rate, equivalent to 229 employees the results were published in "you said....we did" on the intranet and in Wyred Weekly (Appendix 2). From the survey we have focused on three areas for improvement; these are Management, Public Perception and Communications. Half said (55%) they did not feel their Director was effective at building team spirit and 44% disagreed that there is a clear strategic vision and leadership. More than a third of respondents (37%) said they felt the public had a negative view of the Council and 47% felt it had got worse

over the past two years. Almost half of respondents felt that communication between Directorates was not good. Almost 90% said they enjoyed their jobs very much or most of the time.

- 2.6 A staff survey in respect of facilities at Single Site was carried out in May/June 2010. 269 respondents accessed the survey with results being fed into the single site project group.

### **3. Key Issues**

#### **3.1 Programme of Work**

- 3.1.1 Work is being progressed as part of the Council's current Communications Strategy, however, this is being revised and refreshed for 2011/12.

- 3.2 **Media Relations Programme** - All relations between the Council and external media are co-ordinated by the Communications Team. They act as a first point of contact for all enquiries from local newspapers, radio and television stations.

- 3.3 **Employee Survey 2010** - A second employee survey is currently underway with a closing date of 10<sup>th</sup> September. This is to enable us to benchmark progress in relation to the survey conducted in 2009. Results will be published in October in Wyred Weekly.

- 3.4 **Re-design of the Intranet** - The Communications Team (including design officers) is working with colleagues from Customer Services and IT on a complete redesign of the intranet. This is an important part of the transformation programme as the intranet will be key to home working. Colleagues have been consulted on the design. The new intranet is being developed and the architecture constructed. The importance of the intranet will grow as we move towards more home and flexible working, it aims to be an on-line work tool, user friendly, containing regular updates and features and improvements in the search for documents and policies.

- 3.5 **Communication Champions** - We are currently holding a series of workshops with the communication champions to enable the Communication, Website and Design teams to review the Media Planner and Design Request process. This group will meet regularly to brief, update and improve the flow of information between directorates. In addition to this the champions will contribute to the corporate calendar, raise awareness within their own services to improve communication both internally and externally. Our communication champions are: Joanna Payne, Rachael Simpson, Sue Baylis, Penelope Williams, Maria Betteridge, Lesley Fox, Sue Harper, Sarah Lane, Steve Brant, Joanne Duffield, Angela Preece and Elaine Halford-Bishop.

- 3.6 **Review of the Citizens Panel** - It is now time to recruit for a new Panel for the next three years. Our plan is to widen participation by offering additional ways of being in touch such as texting, e mail and offering on line surveys.

- 3.7 **Community Conversations** - We also place great value on Communicating face to face. A series of new community events called Community

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Conversations will begin in October 2010. These events are organised with our key partners, Wyre Forest Matters, which include local government, the public service, the voluntary and community business sector. The idea is to meet and share ideas for creating a better community together. The first event will be held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010, 6.30p.m.- 8.30p.m. at Kidderminster Town Hall, a further three events will take place between November and January in Stourport, Bewdley and Rock.

- 3.8 **Media Protocol** - We are currently reviewing this document to allow a more flexible and proactive approach to promote and maximise media opportunities in a positive way and promote the good work of the Council.
- 3.9 **Viewpoint Survey / Place Survey** - The Government recently announced that the Place Survey, originally scheduled for November 2010 will now not be taking place and has abolished any further surveys under the Place Survey initiative. A saving will be achieved in the current financial year.
- 3.10 The Viewpoint survey is a Worcestershire county wide consultation which takes place twice yearly. The full report results will be available in early September 2010 from the last survey carried out in May / June 2010 and will be reported to CMT and Members. A further Viewpoint survey is scheduled for October/November 2010.
- 3.11 **Online Magazine for Residents** - We will be producing and publishing an On-line magazine for residents twice yearly - Summer and Winter. We will produce this in house by working with the communication champions across directorates to source relevant material for stories. The design and artwork will be produced by our design team and the content written by the media and marketing team. We will not incur print costs as the publications will be posted on-line from our website and will work to develop an e-distribution list. Resources will be met from within existing budgets.
- 3.12 **Transformation Programme** - Communications on the three strands of the Transformation Programme (Making information manageable, Admin Review and Mobile and Flexible working) are being produced by the Communication Team. A Single Site Communications Strategy has also been developed, with an active and evolving work programme and action plan.
- 3.13 **NW Economic & Regeneration** – shared service communications  
The Communication Team sits on the steering group of the NW Economic and Regeneration Joint Working project providing support to the officers in disseminating information to those under the scope of the review. This will include newsletters, workshops and consultation. The project will involve use of 'The Orb' (Redditch and Bromsgrove Intranet) with officers from Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest being able to access communications from a shared intranet.

**4. Options**

- 4.1 That this Committee note the Communications update and note that further updates will be published in the Members Information Bulletin – particularly Viewpoint results and Community Conversation feedback.

**5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Linda Collis, Director of Community and Partnership Services.  
Councillor Tracey Onslow, Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services.

**6. Related Decisions**

- 6.1 CMT approval for Online Magazine for residents – July 2010.

**7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

- 7.1 Corporate Communications Strategy.

**8. Implications**

- 8.1 None.

**9. Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as it is considered that there are no adverse impacts on the six equality strands.

**10. Wards affected**

- 10.1 All wards.

**11. Appendices**

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Wyred Weekly 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010.  
11.2 Appendix 2 – ‘you said...we did’ Employee Satisfaction Survey July 2009.

**12. Background Papers**

- 12.1 None.

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