A Stronger Voice for Bromsgrove District

Communications Strategy Review 2008

Bromsgrove District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

BUILDING PRIDE

Contents

1.   Introduction

In March 2006 the Communication Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council was implemented and subsequently reviewed in 2007.
Originally the Strategy was designed to demonstrate where the Council was and where it wanted to get to. The initial review showed that the Council had made significant progress with the strategic action plan which is part of the strategy. Now the basics are in place and running smoothly this second review will recognise the further progress which has happened over the last year and set out how we can move communications to an even higher level.

Seven priorities and actions were identified as part of the strategy in a bid to drive the actions and its review still highlights these although consultation mechanisms has now been replaced by "Community Engagement" following the launch of the DCLG's White Paper Communities In Control in July. This paper also forms the basis of this review and our actions for the future.

- 'One Council' Corporate Message and Style
- Visible Leadership
- Strategic Planned Communication (Communications of Strategic Agenda)
- Community Engagement
- Member Communication (and Reputation)
- Corporate Brand
- Staff Consultation

In 2006 when the first strategy was written, the Council had made Reputation one of its priorities. This was removed in 2007 because the action plan in this strategy had proved to be so effective that, although still important, communications wasn't seen as critical. The original strategy and subsequent review was based on research carried out by Mori and the IDe&A as part of the Connecting with Communities project. This is still relevant to the Strategy's aim to develop a closer relationship with the customer through communications.

Since the Strategy was written we have had our first CPA inspection which saw us ranked as Poor and are facing a re-inspection in November. Communications was one area highlighted by the inspection and recommendations raised in the feedback were incorporated in the action plan update and our plans for the future. This 2008 review will consider how we have progressed with these.

2.   Developments

In 2007 a Communications and Customer First Manager was apppointed and at the same time the Council signed up to the LGA's Reputation Campaign which identifies some core communication actions which have a particularly significant impact on a council's reputation; these are:-

- Effective media management.

- Provide an A to Z guide to council services.

- Publish a regular council magazine/newspaper.

- Branding – effective and consistent linkage of council brand to services.

- Good internal communications.

Implementing the strategy and taking on board the Reputation Project have seen a number of successful communication projects being launched which are still running. These include:-

Core Brief

Written by ACE after every strategic CMT the Core Brief highlights top table decisions and is delivered at team meetings by Heads of Service / managers.

Staff Recognition Schemes

- **Team of the Month**

The Team of the month award is a process to encourage and reward excellence in the performance of employees. Teams can nominate themselves. Managers are also encouraged to nominate teams they feel should be recognised and a judging panel made up of the Leader and Chief Executive make the final decision. Winning teams are displayed around the building in posters and each team member gets a £20 voucher.

- **Bright Ideas**

Staff are encouraged to submit their bright ideas on how improvements can be made to the everyday workings of the Council. Again winning ideas scoop a £20 voucher and the progress of all the ideas submitted can be tracked on the Intranet.

- **Back to the Floor**

Getting Senior Managers Back to the Floor helps them understand the issues surrounding the day to day business of the Council. Staff even invited Directors and Heads of Service to their departments.

- **Staff Forums**

Twice a year a series of forums, lead by the Chief Executive, are held to deliver information about the direction of the Council and how staff can play their part.
Until the end of 2007 these were led the Chief Executive and demonstrated top down communications. We changed the format of the forums to include speakers from across

all departments and all levels of officers who joined the Chief Executive to lead the forums.

All of the above actions were key to us scooping bronze in the LGcommunications/LGA Reputation Awards 2007.

- **Members' Bulletin**

Each fortnight Members receive a one-sided bulletin with key information about Council policy and events. It is brief and signposts them if they need any more information. This is to cut across the pile of paperwork they receive to highlight vital information they need to know.

- **Connect E-Mail Bulletins**

To keep staff informed about timely decisions or corporate information the e-mail bulletins are sent to all staff in between the monthly staff newsletter.

- **Communications Planner**

This plan goes to CMT every fortnight to make sure that up communications is and remains a top table issue. With this plan we can see potential bannana skins on the horizon and where needed draw up a major events communications plan to deal with that issue. The Communications and Customer First Manager also meets regularly with Heads of Service, ACE and the Chief Executive to update the plan.

- **Leader's Column**

A space has been secured in the Bromsgrove Standard each month to feature a column written by the Leader. A non-political column it focuses on sharing information about how the Council works, it services and latest news so customers can have a better understanding of how local government works.

- **Chat With Kevin**

Local groups and organisations were encouraged to invite the Chief Executive along to their meetings to find out more about the Council and its services.

- **Together Bromsgrove**

Together Bromsgrove was launched in Spring 2007 and replaced the residents' magazine Council Chat. It generates £4,000 of income per edition.

- **Council Tax Leaflet**

This is a joint publication between the County Council, six Districts and the Fire Authority which has been running for five years with increasing buy-in from partners.

- **Communications Plan**

Business case for Joint Communications

In August the Council embarked on a pilot joint chief executive project which saw Bromsgrove's Chief Executive also take on the role at Redditch Borough Council. At the first meeting of the Shared Services Board in September 2008, quick wins already realised since the start of the project focussed on communications-:

> ➢ Communications planner – to identify key communication issues over the next 6 – 12 months

> ➤ Launch of a Members' bulletin
> ➤ Launch of fortnightly Core Brief for staff (following each Corporate Management Team meeting)
> ➤ Launch of Core Brief Extra for staff (emailing of urgent communication issues)
> ➤ Launch of "Ask the Chief Executive" question and answer session on the staff intranet

Joint Chief Executive

For around 18 months we have been exploring joint working and shared services opportunities with Redditch Borough Council. In August 2008 Kevin Dicks took on the role of Acting Joint Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils as part of a year-long project. This decision was made after an external feasibility study had been completed. At the same time as agreeing the proposal Members at both Councils agreed to form a Shared Services Board
Two months later, at its first meeting the Board was asked to approve some 'quick wins' for shared services and joint working opportunities which had already been put in place. From a communications angle a number of quick wins had been put in place at Redditch, based on successful initiatives at Bromsgove. These were:-

- Communications – improvements to communications to RBC based upon the approach adopted at BDC including:
  > ➤ Communications planner – to identify key communication issues over the next 6 – 12 months
  > ➤ Launch of a members bulletin
  > ➤ Launch of fortnightly Core Brief for staff (following each Corporate Management Team meeting)
  > ➤ Launch of Core Brief Extra for staff (emailing of urgent communication issues)
  > ➤ Launch of "Ask the Chief Executive" question and answer session on the staff intranet

With the appointment of a Marketing and Communications Manager at Redditch, a joint commuications plan will ensure messages at each authority regarding the pilot are consistent. The Communications Managers at both authorities will be working closely together to share such messages and other quick wins.

3.   Feedback

By looking at and responding to feedback from all our customers internally and externally we can see how far we have come and where improvements need to be made. Whereas last year, we focussed on feedback from the

- **The Audit Commission**
- **Staff survey 07**
- **Customer Panel**
- **BVPI Satisfaction Survey**

to take strategy forward. This year we will refer to the **Residents' survey July 2008** to mark our progress and set future direction. Although the staff survey 2008 has not been completed yet, we have made sure that we ask relevant questions to find out how well informed staff feel they are and the results will be used as we continually update our communications plans. We will also look at the messages that are coming from Government which put communications and community engagement high on the agenda. See **Priorities for the Year Ahead.**

Residents' Survey July 2008

'Together Bromsgrove

Around 6 in 10 (62%) respondents said that they remember receiving Together Bromsgrove (TB) in the last four months.
Those who remembered receiving TB in the last 4 months were asked how useful they found the publication. 62% said it was useful, while 14% said it was not useful.

How useful did you find the magazine?

Response	Percentage
Very useful	11%
Useful	50%
Neither	24%
Not useful	9%
Not at all useful	6%
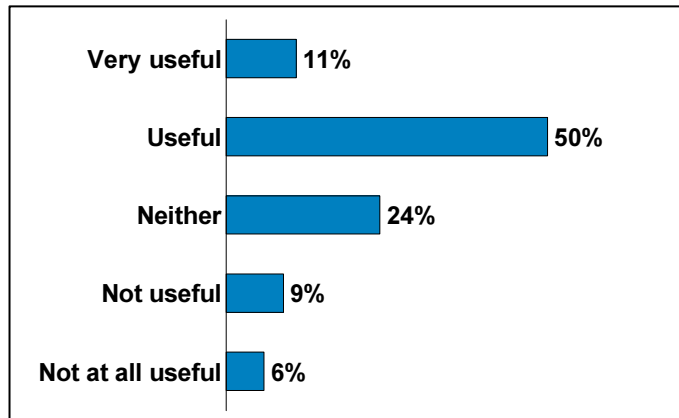
Base: All respondents who received the magazine (361)

Those who said that they had no understanding of the choices that the Council has to make (37%) were less likely than those who had some understanding (65%) or a full understanding (also 65%) to say that TB was useful. Usefulness of Together Bromsgrove

In 2007 half of respondents (49%) remembered receiving Together Bromsgrove and half (51%) did not.
Of those who read or received Together Bromsgrove, 6 out of 10 (59%) found the information to be useful.
As value for money is a concern for our customers, Together Bromsgrove now generates £4,000 per copy to go towards costs through independent advertising.

The Council Tax leaflet
4 in 5 respondents (80%) said that they remembered receiving the most recent Council tax leaflet. Those that did remember receiving it were asked how useful it was; 55% described it as useful while 13% described it as not useful.

How useful did you find the Council Tax leaflet

Category	Percentage
Very useful	6%
Useful	49%
Neither	32%
Not useful	8%
Not at all useful	5%
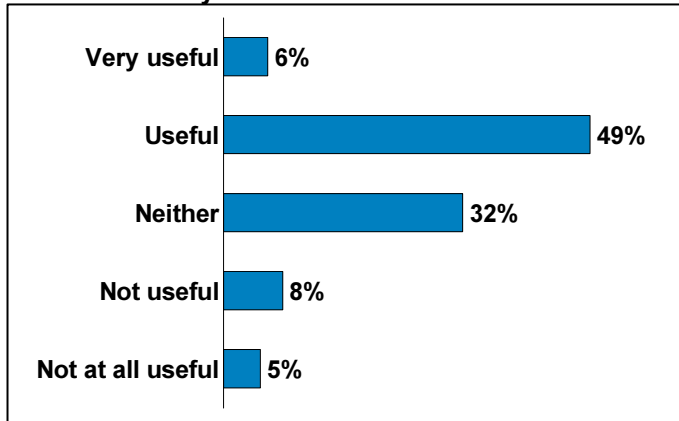
Base: All respondents who received the leaflet (472)

In 2007 (70%) remembered receiving the council tax leaflet and 63% of those who read of receive the council tax leaflet found the information to be useful,

These figures are indicative that our two main methods of communicating with our residents are getting better. More people are reading them and of those who are, an increasing number find it useful.
Feedback like this has been useful in determining the action plan for 2008/09 as it suggests we can build on communications that we have already got in place. But, as we also recognise the need to improve, the DCLG's White Paper Communities in Control signposts the direction we need to take to tailor our already successful communications to step up our duty to engage wit communities. This is explored in more detail in Section 5.

4.   Reviewed Action Plan

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Review of Action September 2007

6.   Sept 07 – Aug 08 Action Plan

Action	How	Measure (SMART)	When/who	Update

1. "One Council" Message and Style

Action	How	Measure (SMART)	When/who	Update
Promote a corporate approach to the design and look of leaflets and publications across the Council	Produce a business case to source three design companies who will provide a service to Council. Communications and Customer First Manager to co-ordinate the out-sourcing in the first instance for all departments so can ensure a corporate approach to the look of future communications.	Audit of the publications as they come through the Communications and Customer First Manager. List of preferred designers compiled.	Dec 07 A-MD / HB	Brand and style guidelines posted on intranet after consultation with the communications working group Preferred Graphics company, Liaison, contracted
Ensure a presence at community events	Bromsgrove bonfire, carnival, street theatre, Rubery carnival, fetes etc provide a large audience to promote the work of the Council and its services.	Customer satisfaction score increased from 34% to 36%	Nov 07 bonfire night onwards	We now have a corporate gazebo which we take out to corporate

			A-MD HB	events such as Hi5 and street theatre
Increase accessibility of Council services.	Continue to work with E-Government and Customer Services and support the launch of new services. Re-launch the Text Messaging Service.	% of residents aware of particular services – see Customer First Strategy 3% increase in BVPI score of awareness of text messaging service	On-going. A-MD HB DP	Customer Access Strategy through CMT Oct 08. Together Bromsgrove is put on CD and as an MP3 link on the website

2. Visible Leadership

Streamline and promote staff forums to cover top table issues but also to inform staff about our services too. Link to business plan.	Remove the 'top-down' feel and invite officers/ manager to speak with Kevin / CMT at each round of forums – four sessions three times a year – including out of hours for CSC	Increase in number of people at forums. Feedback Forms at Forums Through the staff survey demonstrate an increase of 1% of staff who are confident that senior managers are as	December 07 Launch KD HB A-MD	At the last two forums officers have also presented at the forums including customer first, neighbourhood wardens and town centre manager. Feedback has been very positive and at the last

		frank as they could be about what they plan to do.		ones staff took an active role in feeding into the budget consultation process
Manager's meetings made less frequent but longer	To intersperse with Staff Forums and link to business cycle	Feedback Forms at each session Staff survey – demonstrate a 4% target increase in staff who feel they have enough information to do their job with	From September KD / AD	At the last one Managers fed into the budget consultation process with three representatives attending the CMT /Executive Away Day to present feedback from those and the staff forums
Put on two staff events a year –Staff awards / Christmas party and Summer BBQ	The team of the month of the year awards / Christmas Party have yet to be held but we aim to build on the success of these to make them regular features. The Summer BBQ was a success.	Staff survey – to demonstrate a 4% increase in the people who felt Bromsgrove was a good place to work Feedback forms at events	Dec 07 Aug 08 A-MD SS	In December the Team of the Year Year awards were launched and a BBQ was held in August this year. A second BBQ was rained off!

| Raise the profile of senior officer and member teams | Continue with media and Connect coverage of Back to the Floor, Walking the Wards etc. Promote Chat with Kev and encourage involvement in community events. Continued attendance of senior officers at PACT meetings. | Target – senior managers attend 90 % of PACT meetings | Ongoing | Ongoing |

3. Strategic Planned Communication (communication of strategic agenda)

| Develop Internal Communications Planner to sit alongside Communications Planner | The internal communications Planner will reflect issues in the external one but will consider how the issues will affect staff. | Coverage in Media and Connect Staff survey to reflect how increase of 1% of useful the internal communications are | Sept 07 A-MD, MP | Internal communications is integrated into the main communications planner. Issues which affect staff primarily, e.g JE are given a special communications Plan |
| Continue to ensure communications planners are at the top table | More regular meetings with Heads of Service and Managers to encourage them to feed in. | Media coverage – 1% increase of positive coverage in | A-MD MP | From April to July inclusive 71% of media coverage |

	Visit team meetings to show the planners off	newspapers		was positive
Corporate Induction	Presentation slides developed and delivered by Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team.	Feedback forms on corporate induction.	Oct-07 JO and Team.	Slides completed and presentations so far have been carried out.

4. Consultation Mechanisms (feedback) and Policy

Customer Panel	Review and re-let content. Communicate results. Undertake two surveys per year.	Two reports to Cabinet per annum.	Feb.08 Aug.08 JM	Completed and results fed into changes to service delivery
Consultation Policy	Update and agree with Cabinet	Customer Panel CPA feedback	Nov 07 JM	Replaced by community Engagement Strategy
Budget 08/09 consultation	Train team on focus groups and undertake them	Results feed into budget decision-making process.	Jan.08 JM / LB	Training Received
Co-ordinated departmental community engagement plans.	Plans completed as part of business plans and reviewed by Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer.	Co-ordinated programme.	Nov.07 JM	This is an area we need to improve in

5. Member Communication (and Reputation)

Members' bulletin to continue fortnightly	Fortnightly bulletin from CMT co-ordinated by Communications Team.	Six monthly feedback form in the bulletin	Ongoing MP	Ongoing – feedback generally positive.

		Members survey to reflect usefulness of bulletin		
Build Member and Staff relations	Invite Members to staff events, team meetings, and portfolio holders to speak at Staff Forums	Feedback Forms at Staff Forums Staff survey to reflect member / officer relationship – increase of 5%		Staff / Member speed dating set to take place as part of local democracy week
Member training	LGA to lead a session	Feedback Form Future headlines Question in member survey to ascertain how important Council reputation is	Oct 07 A-MD	Held – although feedback on usefulness was, at best, fair
Editorial Panel	Held before each Together Bromsgrove is sent out for views on political neutrality	From Members following each edition Question in member survey to reflect how useful Together Bromsgrove is	Ongoing HB A-MD	Ongoing

6. Corporate Brand

Brand and Style Guidelines to be completed and issued to staff	Put on intranet with a summary version available too	Communications Audit	Sept 07 A-MD	On the intranet

Ensure that the same brand is being adopted across the Council	Visit to teams / staff forum to explain why brand is important	Communications Audit	Dec - Jan 07	Procurement of print and graphics has secured this

7. Staff Consultation

Employee Survey twice a year	Electronic survey sent to staff	Feedback results to staff and show progress from previous survey	Ongoing HP	Survey sent out in Oct 08
Produce an electronic Connect newsletter	Each month the newsletter will be e-mailed to all staff – Copies – or a streamlined version - will be printed and sent to staff at the depot and CSC, or to any other employee with no access to computers, with pay slips.	Staff survey to reflect increase of 3% of how many people think communications has increased overall	From Jan 08 A-MD	E-Bulletins introduced but paper versions of newsletter still needed to reach staff who can't access PCs.
Revamp of staff recognition schemes	Change team of the month to four times a year – but with a runner up too.	Staff Survey to reflect motivation increase of staff of 4%	Jan 08 A-MD SS	Team of the Year awards introduced

5. Priorities for the Ahead

From this feedback and review of the first year, the same seven priorities are still valid; however, the focus within them has changed in some cases particularly to take into account the increased emphasis on community engagement as set out in the DCLG's White paper. Priority four, Consultation Mechanisms, is now called "Engaging with Communties". Wehave also taken in to accountt he feedback from a Managers' conference.

The priorities and the areas of focus for 2008/2009 are set out below. A revised action plan is included overleaf.

1.   "One Council" Corporate Message and Style.

    - Increase awareness of text messaging service.
    - Improve customer accessibility to the Council.

2.   Visible Leadership.

    - Continued attendance of senior managers at PACT meetings, but widen this to Corporate Management Team.
    - Raise profile of Council, officers and Members at events.
    - Maintain strong relations with Chief Executive and staff and a presence of CMT at staff events

3.   Strategic Planned Communication (communication of strategic agenda).

    - Develop Corporate Induction presentation on Council's Vision, Values, Objectives and Priorities.
    - Maintain the corporate communications planner.

4.   Engaging with Communities

    - Ensure a targeted and co-ordinated approach to community engagement through the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team.
    - Through this co-ordinated approach ensure feedback of consultation results to customers to make them realise their views do count. We will develop a "you Decide" campaign to support and implement this.
    - Targeted communications to the community e.g Third Sector, young people through means such as Facebook

5.   Member Communication (and Reputation)

    - Continue with and consult on Members' bulletin
    - Engage with Members to get involvement in community events and projects to raise their profile.

- Medias Training – how to positively represent the Council via the media.

6.   Corporate Brand

- Increase Awareness of Corporate Branding.
- Increase awareness of Graphics and Print Procurement policies
- Identify communication projects in departments and ensure compliance with style guide.

   7.   Staff Consultation

- Consult staff on events and a Corporate Xmas / Celebratory Party and implement

Last year we based our priorities and action plan with the Reputatiobn Project in mind. This year we have focussed on Communictions with our communities based on key documents which have come down from Government. In this part of the review we set out the key messages we have considered and the impact on our communications plan.

5.1 Engaging with Our Communities

The Government is outlining its plans to pass more power to communities and give real control and influence to more people. The key theme of the DCLG Communities in Control White Paper: Real People, Real Power is the development of a participatory democracy and with more empowered citizens. A number of new duties and opportunities are outlined in the white paper with the primary aim of restoring people's faith in politics, local democracy and local Government..

Below are the key specifics of the White paper and their effect on stakeholders.

Councils
- New duty to promote democracy – councils to use new, innovative methods (best practice from excellent authorities) to engage citizens and get them voting
- New duty to respond to petitions, to ensure that issues affecting communities are properly debated (including those affecting the NHS). If more than 5% of the population sign a petition then the issue has to be debated in Full Council. Petitions will also be used as evidence to trigger inspections
- Councils to make it easier for citizens to complain, and standards for Councils to respond to such complaints.
- Overview and Scrutiny to be made more visible to the public, and senior public sector officials to be subject to scrutiny as well as Council officers.

- Consultation activities to be more streamlined (i.e. joining up consultations within the Council and with LSP partners).
- Greater community engagement in the planning process.
- New Comprehensive Area Assessment will include an evaluation of the 'quality of public engagement'
- A new 'Places' database to support to Place survey, CAA and NIs.
- Social enterprises to be allowed to compete for Council contracts.
- Improved information provision, particularly via the internet (i.e. more up to date, more detailed); exploration of new ways of getting information across to citizens.
- Support for independent media.
- Public officials to be more visible.

Councillors:
- More directly-elected mayors
- Discretionary budgets for backbenchers to use in their local areas
- Ability to use council buildings for political meetings
- Formal qualifications that recognise the commitment of councillors
- More neighbourhood councils

Citizens
- Encouragement of more people to stand for election through the use of formal qualifications that recognise the commitment of councillors and greater liaison with employers to allow employees to stand for election without affecting their ability to work.
- Opportunities for participatory budgeting (every council must do some sort of participatory budgeting 2012.
- Voting campaigns and incentives for voting to encourage participation and boost turnout, particularly targeting the less well off and the young
- Adult 'Take Part' Pathfinder programme to help residents become more active citizens and get more involved in local democracy.
- Greater involvement of the public in making decisions on commissioning goods and services and determining value for money
- The establishment of a tenant services authority to give tenants more say.
- Consultation on making it easier for the public to demand referendums
- More information available on how to get more involved in their local community.
- Heightened role of 'the citizen'.
- Trust in citizens' own capabilities to do what's right for their communities.
- Support for communities to tackle climate change on a local level.

Children and Young People
- Extension of schools' Citizenship curriculum.
- Support for CYP to become more engaged through school councils, youth parliaments etc.

- Establishment of £6m National Institute for youth leadership (offering internships etc).

Partners
- Extension of existing 'duty to involve' from April 09 (additional public sector partners have been added to the list).
- £70m Communitybuilders scheme for community organisations help citizens to shape their areas.
- New £50m Community Endowment Fund.
- £7.5m Empowerment Fund for third sector organisations to turn empowerment proposals into action.
- £2m to encourage more disabled people to get involved in volunteering
- Continuation of Grassroots Grants (£80m)
- Establishment of a new asset transfer unit to advise on transferring assets to communities.
- Neighbourhood policing to become a part of neighbourhood management in areas where this already exists.
- Police and health services to be more accountable to the public
- Community Justice schemes
- Discussions on pilot 'Community Payback' schemes
- Local Community Contracts extended
- Investigation into the potential of Community Pledgebanks
- Removal of barriers to commissioning services for faith-based groups.

These key specifics have implications on communications which are key to making most of these successful. How do we communicate these messages to communities, make them feel engaged and become interested in local, public sector decisions is a big issue for this strategy.

5.2 How information is presented
The second paper we have referred to is the **Audit Commissions In the Know** report which sets out key specifications for how information is used and presented which could be crucial if we are to engage with our communities – ajnd them with us . This paper aims to encourage people to think about the information they use whenever they make decisions. It has examples, drawn from many different sources, of how information has been used in improving public services. It also describes how the Commission is reviewing the way that information is generated, presented and used in making decisions. Good information can help decision makers improve decisions, and therefore lead to improvements in public services. Because good information reduces uncertainty, it reduces some of the risk associated with decision making. In 2006 CPA it was revealed that strongly performaning Councils typically make the best use of information than those with a lower star rating.

Figure 1 Strongly performing single tier and county councils demonstrate good information use
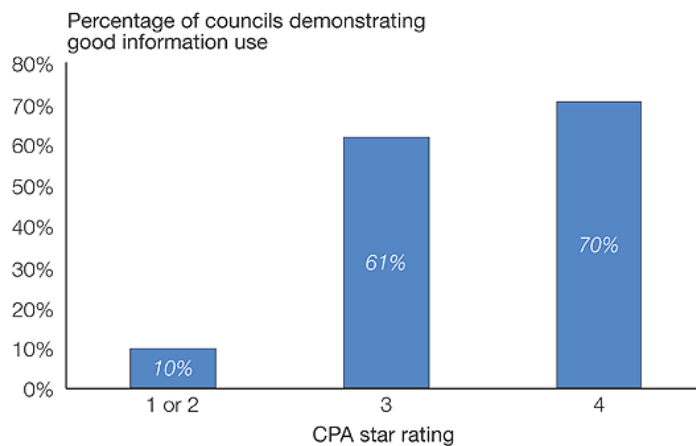
A literature review commissioned from Cranfield University describes innovative good practice in the private sector. In the Know draws on examples in management literature of companies improving performance principally by using information better. Among those cited in the report are:

- a) Tesco's Clubcard has tracked the shopping habits of up to 13 million British families for more than a decade. Clubcard data on Tesco's customers and their behaviour has informed a series of strategic decisions, such as the move into smaller-store formats and the launch of the internet shopping site;
- b) Experian collects and maintains credit history information on consumers and businesses, and uses analytical tools to help business clients make decisions on potential customers' creditworthiness.

By targeting audiences which, for example use our leisure centres, we can ask their views on leisure facility development. Once the information is captured, it can be used again and again.

To back this up the DCLG's **Reporting Performance Information to Citizens** report demonstrates that presentation of information for meaning is key. The report reveals that:-

*"In line with other research findings on satisfaction with council services, **overwhelmingly respondents in all focus groups judged their councils performance based on their personal experiences** with a number of specific services and general perceptions based on word of mouth as opposed to making use of any performance data.*

The majority of respondents were unaware that central government sets targets for local authority performance or that there was independent reviews and audits of local government."

However this report sets out a wide range of 'communication' barriers which were identified by local authorities in relation to performance reporting. These were:-

….communicating perhaps quite 'dry' information to citizens in a meaningful way, process issues around time delays in reporting performance information, technological barriers and political pressures to only communicate 'good news stories'.

This suggest performance information presented in a more honest, meaningful and interesting way could encourage communities to find out more about how their Council is working for them.

What does this mean for Bromsgrove District Council Communications?
Both papers indicate exciting times for local Government and a new and innovative way of doing things. We have picked up, as far as we can, in the 08/09 action plan, our first thoughts on improved communications with these two papers in mind. However, we are aware that extra resources, not least time and money, are needed if we are to meet these demands.
The following action plan is a realistic approach to how we can build on our improved and successful communications which are alreadyin place to better engage in our communities. From changing the way we present the information in our magazine and press releases to promoting consultation initiatives in a targeted and encouraging way are just some ways we meet this Community agenda.

6.   Sept 08 – Aug 09 Action Plan

Action	How	Measure (SMART)	When	Who

1. "One Council" Message and Style

Action	How	Measure (SMART)	When	Who
Increase accessibility of Council services.	Continue to work with E-Government and Customer Services and support the launch of new services and following the launch of the Customer Access Strategy. Re-launch the Text Messaging Service following new contract.	% of residents aware of particular services 3% increase in BVPI score of awareness of text messaging service	On-going. From Oct 08	A-MD HB DP
Ensure a presence at community events	Bonfire, carnival, street theatre, Rubery carnival, fetes etc provide a large audience to promote the work of the Council and its services. A budget bid for a community engagement officer, whio can take up some of this work, is soon to be made	Customer satisfaction score increased from xx% to xx% Feedback forms at events	Dec 08 Ongoing	A-MD HB CF
Promotion of Staff Intranet as means of two-way communication	Once the intranet has been made more user-friendly we will be able to promote the site as a means of two way communication to replace all staff e-mails	% of staff who feel informed Special intranet question in 2009 staffsurvey	Ongoing	A-MD SS

No e-mail Day	Encourage staff to consider the style and content of e-mails they send out and encourage more phone calls, visiting offices to reduce e-traffic	Telephone / E-mail stats Staff survey	Jan 09	A-MD
Sharing our Successes	In the build up to CPA Nov 2008, teams were encouraged to share their successes at events. This needs to be encouraged and stories publicised internally and externally	Staff Survey Satisfaction Survey % increase in postivie media stories	Ongoing	A-MD MP
Customer-focussed communications	Building on our effective Together Bromsgrove publication and Connect, we need to ensure our stories are customer focussed and have a human interest angle	% increase in positive media stories QoLife survey	Ongoing	A-MD MP

3. Visible Leadership

Continue to get staff involved in presenting at staff forums and ensure Kevin and CMT are present	In preparation for our second CPA inspection, each department has been sharinging their successes at forums and meetings. By building on this we can encourage more officers to coem and share their successes with colleagues at forums – which has already proved popular.	Increase in number of people at forums. Feedback Forms at Forums Through the staff survey demonstrate an increase of 1% of staff who are	Oct 08 ongoing	KD HB A-MD

		confident that senior managers are as frank as they could be about what they plan to do.		
Organise staff / member team building exercises	A speed dating event to be held around Local Democracy Week	Feedback Forms at session	From October 08	SM / AD
Put on two regular staff events a year –Staff awards / Christmas party and Summer BBQ with social events in between	Summer BBQs have already been successful. Need to relaunch and work with Sports and Social Club to implement a successful programme of events. After consultation the Council is set t hold its first corporate Xmas party on December 12.	Staff survey – to demonstrate a 4% increase in the people who felt Bromsgrove was a good place to work Feedback forms at events	Dec 08	A-MD SS AG
Raise the profile of senior officer and member teams	Continue with media and Connect coverage of Back to the Floor, to be extended to Members, Walking the Wards etc. Continued attendance of senior officers at PACT meetings. Continue with Roger's Column Council Open Days.	Target – senior managers attend 90 % of PACT meetings Customer satisfaction score increased from xx% to xx%	Ongoing	A-MD

		Customer well-informed about the Council increased from xx% to xx%			
Staff Room / Official Tea Break	A former staff room was identified at the Manager's Conference to be a revamped Staff relaxation area to support the idea of official tea breaks to encourage more staff interaction	Staff Survey	Jan 09		HB A-MD SS

3. Strategic Planned Communication (communication of strategic agenda)

Continue to develop the internal and external Communications Planner with special "mini-plans" to cover incidents	The communications planner covers internal and external messages.	Coverage in Media and Connect. Staff survey to reflect how increase of 1% of useful the internal communications are	Sept 07		A-MD, MP
Continue to ensure communications planners are at the top table	Continued meetings with Heads of Service and Chief Executive and CMT feedback of "lessons Learnt", "things we didn't see coming" and % of proactive and reactive stories	Media coverage – 1% increase of positive coverage in newspapers and 1% increase in number of proactive stories.	Ongoing		A-MD MP

Corporate Induction	To continually update slides delivered by Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team to reflect changes of Council.	Feedback forms on corporate induction.	Ongoing	CCCP
Emergency Communications Plan	Test out the plan as part of a simulated emergency	Feedback session at the end of exercise	April 09	PS A-MD MP

4. Engaging with Communities

Customer Panel	Review and re-let content. Communicate results. Undertake two surveys per year.	One report to Cabinet per annum.	Feb.08 Aug.08	JM
Community Engagement Strategy	Update and agree with Cabinet	Customer Panel CPA feedback	Nov 08	JM
Budget 08/09 consultation	Train team on focus groups and undertake them	Results feed into budget decision-making process.	Jan.08	JM / LB
Co-ordinated departmental community engagement plans.	Plans completed as part of business plans and reviewed by Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer.	Co-ordinated programme.	Nov.08	JM
Visits to schools to raise profile of the Council and role of Member	As part of the Democracy Teams plans to raise awareness, we need to develop communications around this to publicise the initiative		Jan 09	
Targeted Communications	By highlighting community groups e.g Third Sector, parish Councils sports clubs, we can send them information they need and ask for their views on relevant issues	Customer well-informed about the Council increased from xx% to xx%	Nov 08	A-MD MP

	Reachign out to Young people and asking for views via Facebook		Jan 09	A-MD

5. Member Communication (and Reputation)

Members' bulletin to continue fortnightly	Fortnightly bulletin from CMT co-ordinated by Communications Team.	Six monthly feedback form in the bulletin Members survey to reflect usefulness of bulletin	ongoing	MP
Replace Roger's Column	Currently the Leader has a monthly coloumn in the local newspaper. This could be expanded to include Cabinet Members and the readers are invited to send in questions a month in advance	Monitor positive / negative press cuttings	Jan 09	MP
Build Member and Staff relations	Invite Members to staff events, team meetings, and portfolio holders to speak at Staff Forums	Feedback Forms at Staff Forums Staff survey to reflect member / officer relationship – increase of 5%	December 08	A-MD
Members' media and reputation training	Most of our members are media savvy but there is a need for training on how to represent the Council in a positive light when dealing with the media	Decrease in number of reactive articles in the mdia	Jan 09	A-MD HP
Member Back to the Floor	Invite Members to spend time in departments	Staff survey to reflect member /	Oct 08	SS

		officer relationship – increase of 5%		
Editorial Panel	Held before each Together Bromsgrove is sent out for views on political neutrality	From Members following each edition	ongoing	HB A-MD

6. Corporate Brand

Brand and Style Guidelines to be reviewed	Staff consultation on them and amendments made prior to relaunch and with graphics and print procurement in mind	Communications Audit	Feb 09	A-MD
Ensure that the same brand is being adopted across the Council	Visit to teams / staff forum to explain why brand is important	Communications Audit	Feb 09	A-MD

7. Staff Consultation

Employee Survey twice a year	Electronic survey sent to staff	Feedback results to staff and show progress from previous survey	ongoing	HP
Co-ordinate and streamline staff communications	On top of the Connect newletter, e-connects are sent. Need to be streamlined and the intranet, once revamped utilised more	Staff survey to reflect increase of 3% of how many people think communications has increased overall Intranet survey	From Jan 09	SS MP

Revamp of staff recognition schemes	Continue with annual awards on top of monthly	Staff Survey to reflect motivation increase of staff of 4%	Dec 08 - ongoing	A-MD SS
Back to the Floor	Continue with tracker on the intranet and more success stories to show outcomes via Connect or the intranet	Staff Survey to reflect motivation increase of staff of 4%	ongoing	SS
Staff job swap	Opportunity to be built into and encouraged through the PDR system	Staff Survey to reflect motivation increase of staff of 4%	Oct 09	HP

7. Conclusions

This review shows how far we have come in the last two years and the success is validated by the results from surveys and consultations. However, as the action plan for 08/09 shows, a lot of the projects are either ongoing or have been slightly revamped which indicates without extra resource we can't move communications much further on.

The papers from Government set out key specifics which do call on better presented, proactive and two way communications to raise the profile of the Council, its role and members and encourage particiaption from residents.

For us that means mainly focussing on the communication channels we have in place but presenting and targeting the information differently to better inform and engage with our communities.

This review has revealed how far we have come and sets out how we can take this even further by implementing the updated action plan and making sure the communications planner is kept up to date and accurate. We will continue to ask all our customers how well they feel they are being communicated to so we can identify areas where further and future improvements can be made.

At the time of this review the 2008 staff survey had not been completed but, as ever, feedback from staff, members, our customers and indeed Inspectors will be taken on board as we roll out the action plan.

8.   Contact

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8. References

9.

Bromsgrove District Council Residents' Survey July 2008

DCLG Communities in Control White Paper: real people, real power

Audit Commission's In the Know Report

Bromsgrove District Council's Communications Strategy review 2007. A Stronger Voice for Bromsgrove

Customer Panel Quality of Life 2008

Customer Satisifaction Survey 2008

DCLG's **Reporting Performance Information to Citizens**
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/35.pdf