

# A Stronger Voice for Everyone in Bromsgrove



## Communications Strategy Review 2009



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



## Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Developments	4
3.	Feedback	7
4.	Reviewed Action Plan	13
5.	Priorities for the Year Ahead	21
6.	Action Plan September 09 – 10	23
7.	Conclusions	34
8.	Contacts	36
9.	Appendices	37

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1** This is the third review of the Communication Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council which was first launched in 2006. 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 have been firmly implemented in the culture of the Council.
- 1.2** The purpose of this review is to set out how we can build on this success and rejuvenate schemes which have become jaded. Another consideration in this review is the recent decision to pursue a Shared Services agenda with Redditch Borough Council. The review will also recognise the further progress which has happened over the last year and set out how we can move communications to an even higher level.
- 1.3** Seven priorities and actions were identified as part of the original strategy in a bid to drive the actions and its review still highlights these to demonstrate what we have done over the last year.
- '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
- 1.4** Since the Strategy was written and revised we have had our second CPA inspection which, in March, saw us catapult from Poor to Fair. Communications was one area highlighted by the inspection and recommendations raised in the feedback have been incorporated in the action plan update and our plans for the future. We have also received the results from the first Place Survey Report and the outcomes play a huge part in how we plan to take communications forward in this strategy.
- 1.5** As a result, and to take into account the Shared Services Agenda, the seven priorities and actions have been updated to include:-
- Reputation and Resident Satisfaction
  - Value for Money (Including Shared Services)
  - Influencing and Engagement
  - Modern Council
  - Visible Leadership
  - Customer Access
  - Benchmarking

## 2. Developments

2.1 In 2007 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.

2.2 Implementing the strategy and taking on board the Reputation Project have seen a number of successful communication projects being launched, some of which are still running and others which, through this strategy we will seek to revamp following customer feedback.

2.3 Projects which have stood the test of time include:-

### 2.4 **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.

### 2.5 **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. It has recently been redesigned to complement the design of the bulletin at Redditch.

### 2.6 **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.

### 2.7 **Connect Newsletter**

This comes out each month and has recently been redesigned to give a brighter, fresher feel and to correspond with the e-connect's branding. We have also given a more 'staff social' feel to it with reviews, competitions, snapped with the stars and event coverage to break down the 'silo mentality'.

## **2.8 Staff and Manager Forums**

Staff forums are held twice a year and manager's forums intersperse these. However in light of Shared Services we have increased the number of staff forums and put the managers' forums on hold for the time being.

## **2.9 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 banana 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.

## **2.10 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, its services and latest news so customers can have a better understanding of how local government works.

## **2.11 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.

## **2.12 Together Bromsgrove**

Together Bromsgrove was launched in Spring 2007 and replaced the residents' magazine Council Chat. It comes out three times a year and has an income generation target of £4,000 per edition.

## **2.13 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.

## **2.14 Wrap-Arounds**

These intersperse Together Bromsgrove and are used to publicise information like our Annual Report, Customer Standards and more recently our support packages during the economic crisis.

## **2.15 Facebook and Twitter**

We have launched feeds on both of these social networking sites which are updated from RSS feeds from our website to save duplication of information.

## **2.16 Business case for Joint Communications**

In August 2008 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. Quick wins already realised since the start of the project focussed on communications and included:-

- Communications planner – to identify key communication issues over the next 6 – 12 months
- Launch of a Members' bulletin in Redditch
- 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

**2.17** These joint projects have been increased especially since the decision to pursue the Shared Services Programme and adopt a Joint Chief Executive. BDC’s Communications and Customer First Manager works closely with the Communications and Marketing Manager in post at Redditch and projects now include:-

- Shared Services Integrated Planner
- Staff Forums and drop-in sessions
- Timely Residents’ magazines
- Joint Shared Services information – e.g staff articles, press releases, articles

## **Projects which are set to be revamped.**

### **2.18 Staff Recognition Schemes**

#### **Team of the Month**

This has been running since 2006 and, following feedback in the employee survey this year, it was obvious it needed to be relaunched as buy-in to it had decreased.

### **2.19 Bright Ideas**

This is also looking to be relaunched as participation to it dwindled from its launch in 2006.

### **2.20 Back to the Floor**

As the Shared Services programme moves on getting Senior Managers and indeed teams Back to the Floor becomes more imperative as staff and the new management structure need to meet their new line managers and counterparts at Redditch Borough Council.

**2.21** These initiatives were put in place in 2006 when there was no staff recognition scheme at all and indeed very little robust communication. While they seem to have served their purpose, they are a good platform for which to progress more improved schemes and it is worth remembering that the above actions were key to us scooping bronze in the LGcommunications/LGA Reputation Awards 2007.

### 3. Feedback

3.1 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. This year we will focus on:-

- **Place Survey 09**
- **Employee Survey 08**
- **In the Know Shared Services Internal Communications survey 2009**
- **CPA Report 2008**

3.2 We will also look at the messages that are coming from Government which continue to put communications and community engagement high on the agenda. See **Priorities for the Year Ahead**.

#### 3.3 **Place Survey**

This report presents the findings from the 2008/09 statutory Place Survey conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council. The survey was conducted via a postal self-completion approach, as prescribed by the Audit Commission and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

3.4 Fieldwork was carried out from 29 September to 19 December 2008. Although there is no direct data to measure our communications channels, the information regarding how informed and involved people feel is vital because of the Government's ever increasing need for local authorities to consult and feedback.

#### 3.5 **Being Kept Informed and Involved**

For Bromsgrove District Council the Place Survey results were concerning. The amount of residents satisfied with their local area was 81%, which is high, but the results also showed that 34% of residents were not satisfied with the way their local Council runs things.

3.6 More disappointing results revealed that just 24% of people feel they can influence Council decisions and only 23% of residents think the Council provides VFM (tables overleaf). This is a problem because it means that residents aren't aware of the Council's vast improvements.

3.7 The Council has clearly done a lot of engagement which was praised in the CPA report and the performance figures speak for themselves. Turning around this dissatisfaction and improving our reputation is a key priority which this strategy plays a key role in.

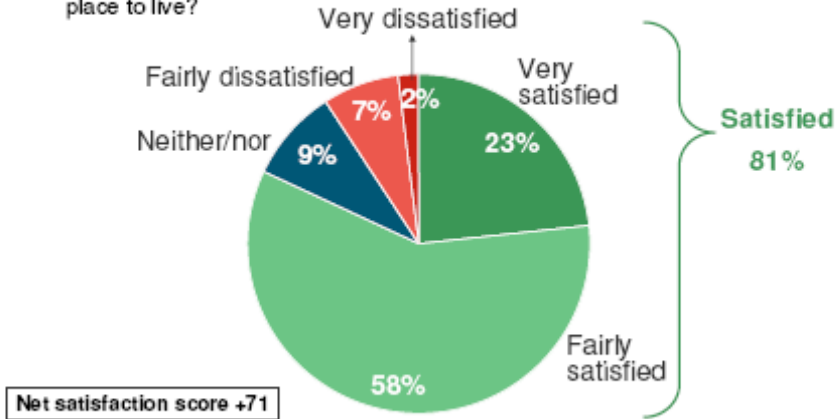
### 3.8 Place Survey Results 2009

Here are the key results from the Place Survey which this strategy particularly focuses on.

### 3.9

#### General satisfaction with local area (NI 5)

Q Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

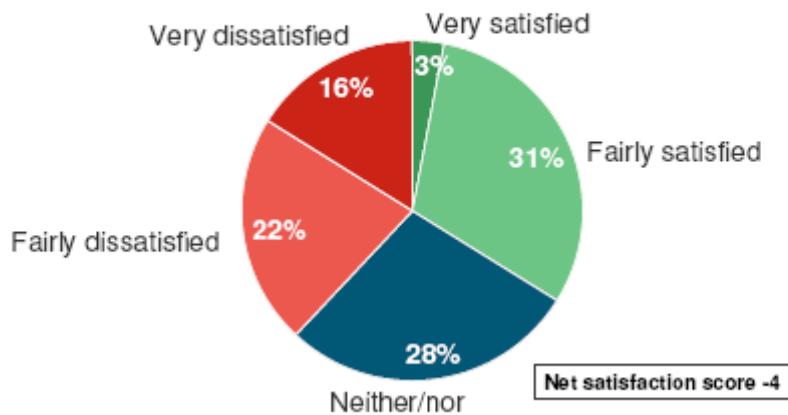


Ipsos MORI Base: All valid responses (1126)

### 3.10

#### Satisfaction with Council

Q Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Bromsgrove District Council runs things?



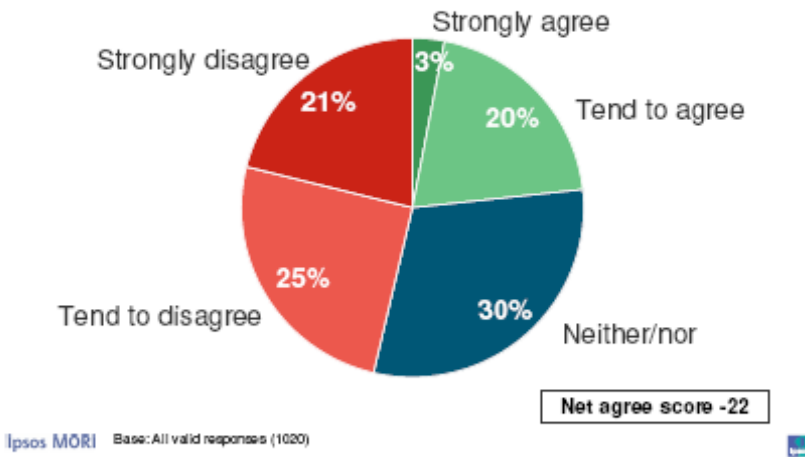
Ipsos MORI Base: All valid responses (1057)



3.11

**Value for money**

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that Bromsgrove District Council provides value for money?

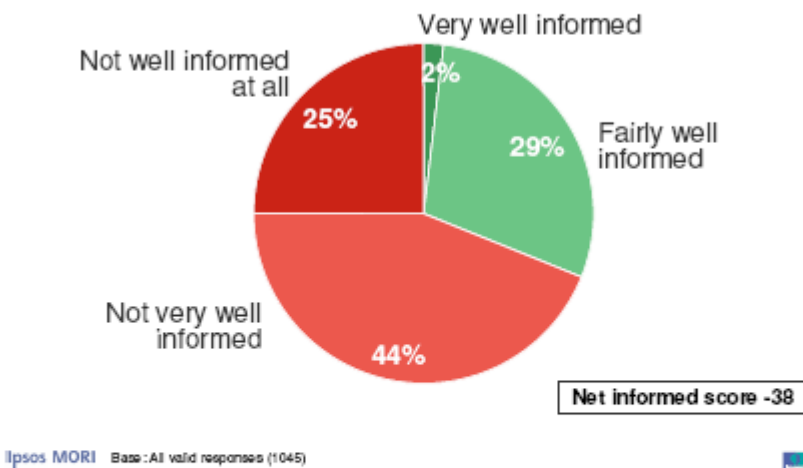


As with the overall council satisfaction score, Bromsgrove performs worse than average for Worcestershire (24% versus 35%) and for the Districts surveyed by Ipsos MORI (36%) in terms of delivering value for money.

3.12

**Being kept informed**

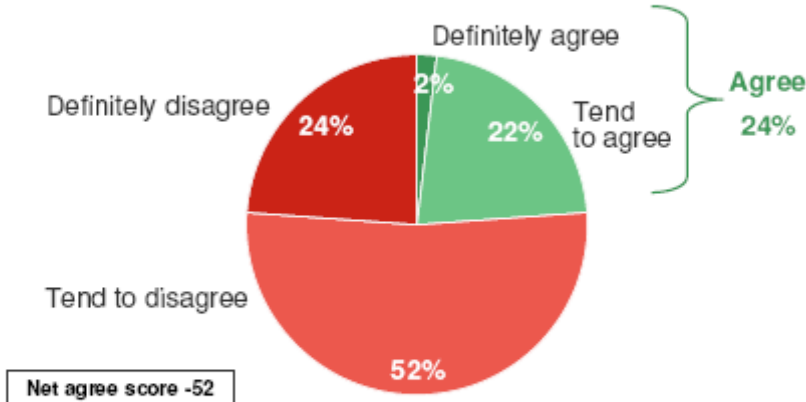
Q Overall, how well informed do you feel about local public services?



Bromsgrove residents feel less informed than the average Worcestershire resident (31% versus 39%), as the following chart highlights. Bromsgrove also underperforms compared to the wider Ipsos MORI averages.

### Influencing decisions (NI 4)

Q Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?



Ipsos MORI Base: All valid responses (966)

In terms of residents feeling they can influence decisions made locally (NI 4) Bromsgrove's performance has declined by seven percentage points since 2006/07.

### 3.14 Employee Survey 2008

While the employee survey carried out in 2008 shows less people felt communications were better than 2007 there were contributing factors around that for example voluntary redundancies, job evaluation and potential shared services

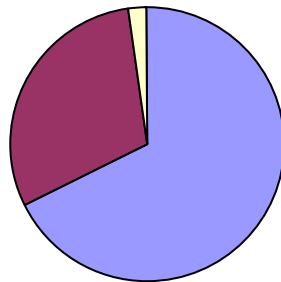


3.15 A range of actions have been agreed by CMT as a result of the survey to improve communications around big projects affecting staff e.g Shared Services (See below). These also include relaunch Team Awards, improved long service awards and a possible Summer event equivalent to that at Xmas.

**3.16 In the Know 2009 – Shared Services**

We asked staff how informed they were with all the internal communications we had sent out with regards Shared Services from August 2008 to Sept 2009. The results – 68% informed - are below and some comments are also included as, the only reason staff felt less than very informed was because they hadn't been told how the changes would directly effect – if they hadn't received all the information.

**In the Know Survey Results**



**3.17 Quotes**

“Very” – or at least as well as Kevin is able to inform at this stage.

“Is there a bigger picture that we are not seeing and not being informed of?”

“My only comment would be that there could be more detail on how the plans will impact on individual services”

“as well as we can be as clearly there are plenty of issues that can't be made public at this point in time and plenty of decisions that still have to be made.”

### 3.18 CPA Report 2008

Although the report recognised there had been improvements in communications it highlighted some areas which needed to be improved which we have taken into account as we update the action plan in this review.

14 Improve external communication by:

- regularly checking that the community understands the Council's messages and information. This will help the public know what services are offered by the Council and allow the Council to highlight what it has achieved.
- providing clear and regular information updates on progress, especially for longer term projects such as the town centre.

### 3.19

32 The Council's communication with the public is adequate. It is now better at presenting the Council to the press and there are fewer disagreements between councillors within the letters pages. One of the local newspapers recently carried an article on Council success stories and the Leader writes a monthly column. However, the Council does not consistently evaluate its external communications and whether local people understand the messages. Similarly, the Council does not consistently evaluate the impact of its public consultation and engagement activity, and does not always feed back the results of consultations to those taking part. Without this final part of communication, the Council will not always know if its investments are working and the public will not be clear what difference their contribution has made.

### 3.20 How we have responded

This is set out in the action plan for 2009/10 but key highlights are:-

- Communications focus groups – following the success of one around our co-mingling waste changes we plan to hold more of these
- You said, we did – more feedback on survey results and changes which have been made as a result
- Relaunch of staff recognition schemes
- More targeted communication e.g town flyer which updated traders on the town centre, children and young people's newsletter, older person's directory.

## 4. Reviewed Action Plan

Action	How	When	Progress
<b>1. "One Council" Message and Style</b>			
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.	On-going.  From Oct 08	Facebook and Twitter presence launched  Text messaging being rolled out across organisation
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, who can take up some of this work, is soon to be made	Dec 08 Ongoing	Presence including consultation carried out at street theatre Promotional packs given to Catshill parish fete
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	Ongoing	Lack of resources means that ideas for interactive

	to replace all staff e-mails		front page on desktops and total revamp have not been carried out. However we are looking to pursue joint working on this with Redditch
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	Jan 09	This was led by the Leadership Group and we fed back our experiences at staff forums and in Connect – it lead to sharing best practice on how to cut down on e-mail traffic
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	Ongoing	Team of the Year Awards at staff Xmas party. Sharing is encouraged at staff forums
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	Ongoing	Both publications have been revamped to include customer

			focussed and lifestyle articles
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**2. 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 sharing their successes at forums and meetings. By building on this we can encourage more officers to come and share their successes with colleagues at forums – which has already proved popular.	Oct 08 ongoing	Regular staff forums have been held and include Kevin, CMT and officers however shared services has meant the forums are more frequent and generally lead by Kevin as the subject is so contentious
Organise staff / member team building exercises	A speed dating event to be held around Local Democracy Week	From October 08	Members were invited to staff Xmas party and Summer BBQ
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.	Dec 08	2008 saw the inaugural staff Xmas party and a Summer BBQ

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.	Ongoing	All ongoing
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	Jan 09	This is still being considered

**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.	Sept 07	Ongoing
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	Ongoing	On-going
Corporate Induction	To continually update slides delivered by Corporate Communications, Policy and	Ongoing	Ongoing



	Performance Team to reflect changes of Council.		
Emergency Communications Plan	Test out the plan as part of a simulated emergency	April 09	This was done during a partner exercise including Polymerlatex and subsequently for real during the Swine Flu pandemic

**4. Engaging with Communities**

Customer Panel	Review and re-let content. Communicate results. Undertake two surveys per year.	Feb.08 Aug.08	Ongoing
Community Engagement Strategy	Update and agree with Cabinet	Nov 08	Currently updated due to new person in post
Budget 08/09 consultation	Train team on focus groups and undertake them	Jan.08	Completed
Co-ordinated departmental community engagement plans.	Plans completed as part of business plans and reviewed by Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer.	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	Ongoing

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	Nov 08	Ongoing – launch of town flyer, facebook and twitter
	Reaching out to Young people and asking for views via Facebook	Jan 09	

**5. Member Communication (and Reputation)**

Members' bulletin to continue fortnightly	Fortnightly bulletin from CMT co-ordinated by Communications Team.	ongoing	Ongoing
Replace Roger's Column	Currently the Leader has a monthly column 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	Jan 09	The column was made more interactive
Build Member and Staff relations	Invite Members to staff events, team meetings, and portfolio holders to speak at Staff Forums	December 08	Members joined in the Xmas Party
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	Jan 09	Given the use of the media by Members this was deemed not necessary!
Member Back to the Floor	Invite Members to spend time in departments	Oct 08	As part of customer first part 3 some members spent time at the CSC

Editorial Panel	Held before each Together Bromsgrove is sent out for views on political neutrality	ongoing	Members have changed but it is still ongoing
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**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	Feb 09	These have been reviewed to add in new templates etc but needs redoing with shared services in mind
Ensure that the same brand is being adopted across the Council	Visit to teams / staff forum to explain why brand is important	Feb 09	Work has been ongoing with other departments to ensure this

**7. Staff Consultation**

Employee Survey twice a year	Electronic survey sent to staff	ongoing	The last one was in 2008.
Co-ordinate and streamline staff communications	On top of the Connect newsletter, e-connects are sent. Need to be streamlined and the intranet, once revamped utilised more	From Jan 09	A triangulation effect using Core Brief, Connect, E-Connects and intranet with consistent messages and signposting has been adopted

Revamp of staff recognition schemes	Continue with annual awards on top of monthly	Dec 08 - ongoing	This is being overhauled as part of the Staff Xmas Party 2009
Back to the Floor	Continue with tracker on the intranet and more success stories to show outcomes via Connect or the intranet	ongoing	This is set to be revamped as part of shared services
Staff job swap	Opportunity to be built into and encouraged through the PDR system	Oct 09	This has happened in Legal and democratic services

## 5. Priorities for the Year Ahead

### 5.1 Reputation and Resident Satisfaction.

- Revamp Corporate Induction presentation on Council's Vision, Values, Objectives and Priorities.
- Revamp Corporate Induction presentation on Council's Vision, Values, Objectives and Priorities.
- Maintain the corporate communications planner.
- See VFM and Influencing and Engagement

**Outcome: Increase 34 % of residents who are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (Place Survey 04/06/09)**

### 5.2. Value for Money (Inc Shared Services)

- Value for Money Campaign rolled out over three years
- Ensure consistent messages from Leaders, Joint Chief Executive and Heads of Service to reflect the views of both Councils with Shared Services in mind
- Make sure the Joint Chief Executive maintains a visible presence
- Maintain and update the Shared Services Integrated Planner
- Develop brand and style guidelines for each service area which goes through Shared Services
- Continue to consult with staff on Shared Services Communications

**Outcome: Increase 23% of residents who think the Council provides VFM (Place Survey 04/06/09)**

### 5.2 Influencing and Engagement

- Promote 'The Big Five' events which engage with communities e.g Budget Jury, Equalities Conference
- Listening Times to demonstrate residents can make a difference – 'you said, we did'.
- 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 – make sure the hard to reach areas e.g Wythall and Hagley are also get informed and know how to get involved.
- Communications Focus Groups

**Outcome: Increase 24% of people who feel they can influence Council decisions (Place Survey 04/06/09)**

### 5.6 Modern Council

- Increase Awareness of Corporate Branding.
- Increase awareness of Graphics and Print Procurement policies
- Work with reprographics and teams to ensure a co-ordinated approach to Council communications
- Increase awareness of other channels of communication.
- Improve customer accessibility to the Council.
- Ensure staff awareness of the media protocol and procedures

**Outcome: Increase 34 % of residents who are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (Place Survey 04/06/09)**

### 5.7 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
- Revamp Team of the month, Back to the Floor and Staff Forums
  - Meet the Cabinet

**Outcome: Increase 52% of staff who feel their managers demonstrate visible leadership (Staff Survey 2008)**

### 5.8 Customer Access

- Increase Awareness of Corporate Branding.
- Increase awareness of Graphics and Print Procurement policies
- Work with reprographics and teams to ensure a co-ordinated approach to Council communications
- See Customer Access Strategy

**Outcome: Increase 34 % of residents who are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (Place Survey 04/06/09)**

### 5.9 Benchmark

- Scrutiny Exercise
- Trips to excellent Councils e.g Selby to see how they moved from weak to excellence
- Attendance at communications events e.g LGComms
- Maintain presence at County Communications Group

**Outcome: All of the above!**

## 6. Sept 09 – Aug 10 Action Plan

Action	How	Measure (SMART)	When	Who
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### 1. Reputation and Residents' Satisfaction

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.  Increase 31% of staff who feel communications has improved (Staff Survey 2008)	Sept 09 ongoing	A-MD, JC
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.  Increase 31% residents feel informed (Place Survey 2009)	Ongoing	A-MD JC

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
Communication Focus Groups <b>See also Customer Access</b>	To hold a pilot focus in Wythall to tap into local knowledge as to how we can best keep this community informed. To rolled out to Rubery and Hagley	Increase 31% residents feel informed (Place Survey 2009)	Dec 2009	A-MD
Emergency Communications Plan	Test out the plan as part of a simulated emergency	Feedback session at the end of exercise	April 2010	PS A-MD MP

**2. Value For Money (including Shared Services)**

Value For Money – A three year campaign	To include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Report wraparound</li> <li>• Council Tax Leaflet</li> <li>• Features in Together Bromsgrove</li> <li>• VFM references in press releases, Rogers' column etc</li> </ul>	Increase 23% of residents who think the Council provides VFM (Place Survey 04/06/09)	April 09 ongoing – April 2012	A-MD JC SS
Joint press releases on certain issues	Regular meetings with Redditch Comms about joint comms planner	Media monitoring of press articles around Shared Services	ongoing	A-MD/ AM
Ensuring consistent, timely communications which reflect the individuality of each authority	These include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media releases</li> <li>• Together Bromsgrove/Redditch Matters</li> <li>• Members' Bulletin</li> </ul>	Increase 31% of staff who feel communications has improved (Staff Survey 2008)	ongoing	A-MD AM



Joint communications planner	To sit alongside the existing communications Planner, this document will highlight the up and coming issues which both Councils can issue joint communications on	Media monitoring of % positive and negative articles	October 2009 launch	A-MD AM
Ensure consistent messages around shared services are sent out to target audiences	<p>Make sure each Council's communications, including targeted, have the same message.</p> <p>Co-ordinate specific messages around shared services – letters from leaders, presentation to local groups</p> <p>A-MD and AM to meet each month to identify these</p>	<p>Media monitoring of % positive and negative articles</p> <p>Increase 31% residents feel informed (Place Survey 2009)</p>	ongoing	A-MD AM
Ensure Kevin's message to Members is consistent and timely across both Councils	Share Kevin's message in the bulletin across both Councils	<p>Members' bulletin satisfaction survey</p> <p>Increase 67% of staff who felt informed about shared services (SS Staff Survey 2009)</p>	ongoing	A-MD AM
Joint events with Redditch Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Awards</li> <li>• Events e.g BBQ, Xmas Party</li> <li>• Welcome event</li> </ul>	Staff Survey – shared services specific question	ongoing	A-MD AM

Joint forums with Redditch staff	As some staff may be based over at Redditch, forums could be held to encourage staff to go and attend a forum at the other authority	Staff Survey – shared services specific question	Jan 2010	A-MD AM
Shared teams encouraged to 'job swap' with counterparts	As part of the PDR system it could be an opportunity for staff to visit their counterparts and try the systems and procedures in place there to gain an understanding of the uniqueness of each authority	Staff Survey – shared services specific question	April 2010	A-MD HP
Shared services brand and style guidelines	As more and more teams go through shared services we need to look at their use of logos and update each Council's brand and style guidelines accordingly – eventually producing an overarching document	Communications Audit	October 2009 ongoing	A-MD AM
Joint intranet	Work to develop a joint, interactive intranet across both Councils	Increase 31% of staff who feel communications has improved (Staff Survey 2008)	April 2010	A-MD AM
Continue to get staff involved in presenting at staff forums and ensure Kevin and CMT are present	Develop a 'team latest news' section on intranet when revamped so departments can update their successes themselves	Increase in number of people at forums. Feedback Forms at Forums Internal communications	Jan 2010 – when new intranet is up and running	KD HB A-MD

		staff survey		
Organise staff / member team building exercises	Invite members to staff events like Xmas Party and Summer BBQ – even staff forums?	Feedback Forms at session	From October 09	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. The inaugural Staff Xmas party was a success so a second one in Dec 09 is planned	Staff survey – to demonstrate a 4% increase in the people who felt Bromsgrove was a good place to work  Feedback forms at events	Dec 09	A-MD SS

### 3. Influencing and Engagement

Promote the Council's 'Big Five' opportunities to engage with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities consultation conference</li> <li>• U Decide</li> <li>• Budget Jury</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Website</li> </ul>	Increase 24% of people who feel they can influence Council decisions (Place Survey 2009)	Sept 09 ongoing	A-MD, JC
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Communications Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Together Bromsgrove</li> <li>• Xmas Waste Changes</li> <li>• How can we best communicate with communities – focus groups in Wythall, Hagley and Rubery</li> </ul>	Customer satisfaction score increased CAA score	Nov ongoing	A-MD RD
Budget 10/11 staff	Include as part of staff forums	Results feed into budget decision-making process.	Jan 2010	A-MD RD

**4. Modern Council**

Brand and Style Guidelines to be reviewed  <i>See also VFM and Shared Services</i>	Staff consultation on them and amendments made prior to relaunch and with graphics and print procurement in mind. Set up working group	% customers informed about services	Sept 09 ongoing	A-MD
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. Continue to re-launch the Text Messaging Service across departments following new contract.	% of residents aware of particular services  3% increase in BVPI score of awareness of text messaging service	On-going.  Ongoing	A-MD HB DP

<p>Ensure a presence at community events</p>	<p>Bonfire, carnival, street theatre, Rubery carnival, fetes etc provide a large audience to promote the work of the Council and its services. Investment in banners etc and other publicity material so we have an easy to assemble presence</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction score increased  Feedback forms at events</p>	<p>Nov 09 – Aug 2010</p>	<p>A-MD HB HM/JH</p>
<p>Complete overhaul of Staff Intranet and promotion of it as a means of two-way communication  <i>See also VFM and Shared Services</i></p>	<p>The intranet is in an integral part of the triangulation of communications internally. To encourage use it needs to be open on people's desk-top with a scrolling front page with latest news</p>	<p>% of staff who feel informed  Special intranet question in 2010 staff survey</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A-MD/DW AM (see Shared Services)</p>
<p>Sharing our Successes</p>	<p>Through staff forums which enable officers to demonstrate what they have been working on  Encourage staff to share their news with Connect newsletter  Visit teams to show successful stories which have come out of other teams sharing their news and getting publicity through Media, Together Bromsgrove or internally</p>	<p>Staff Survey  Satisfaction Survey  % increase in positive media stories</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A-MD JC</p>

	Ensure staff are aware of how the communications procedures run and how they can get their messages out.			
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  Recall rate of Together Bromsgrove	Ongoing	A-MD JC
Ensure that the same brand is being adopted across the Council  <i>See also VFM and Shared Services</i>	Visit to teams / staff forum to explain why brand is important	Communications Audit	Jan 10	A-MD

### 5 Visible Leadership

Raise the profile of Kevin and Roger with the public	Work with Newsquest to use their website for blogs by the Chief Exec and Leader	Customer Panel Survey	Nov 09	A-MD KD
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	Target – senior managers attend 90 % of PACT meetings	Ongoing	A-MD

	PACT meetings. Continue with Roger's Column Council Open Days.	Quality of Life Survey (?)		
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	JC
Roger's Column	Continue with monthly column	Monitor positive / negative press cuttings	ongoing	A-MD
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%	Ongoing	A-MD
Member Back to the Floor	Invite Members to spend time in departments as reflected in Customer First Strategy	Staff survey to reflect member / officer relationship – increase of 5%	Nov 09	SS
Editorial Panel	Held before each Together Bromsgrove is sent out for views on political neutrality	From Members following each edition	ongoing	HB A-MD

Revamp Back to the Floor, Team of the Month, Chat with the Chief	These need relaunching and promoting	Increase 28% felt team of the month motivated them in their job (Staff survey 2008)	Jan 2009 ongoing	A-MD SS
Meet The Cabinet / SMT	As with chat with the chief this is an opportunity to ask groups to invite Cabinet / SMT to existing meetings	Increase 34 % of residents who are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (Place Survey 04/06/09)	March 2010	A-MD

**6. Customer Access**

Older Person's Directory	Staff consultation on them and amendments made prior to relaunch and with graphics and print procurement in mind. Set up working group	% customers informed about services	Sept 09 ongoing	A-MD
Young Person's Wrap-around	Visit to teams / staff forum to explain why brand is important	Communications Audit	Jan 10	A-MD
Website access – different formats	Promote the use of the website to access services and make sure publications are available in different formats e.g Together Bromsgrove as MP3 link	Increase 31% residents feel informed (Place Survey 2009)	Ongoing	JC
Text messaging / Twitter and Facebook	Develop and promote the amount of news and engagement opportunities accessible to everyone	Increase 31% residents feel informed (Place Survey 2009)	Ongoing	JC



**7. Benchmarking**

<p>Scrutiny Exercise</p>	<p>How we communicate with residents –and indeed this strategy – will be subject to a scrutiny exercise</p>	<p>Increase 31% residents feel informed</p> <p>Increase 34 % of residents who are satisfied with the way the Council runs things</p> <p>Increase 24% of people who feel they can influence Council decisions</p> <p>(Place Survey 04/06/09)</p>	<p>Nov 2009</p>	<p>HB A-MD</p>
<p>Attendance at Communication events</p>	<p>LGCommunications conference County communications Group meetings WMLRF meetings Trips to authorities e.g Selby Communications Benchmarking Group</p>	<p>Increase 31% residents feel informed</p>	<p>Nov 2009 ongoing</p>	<p>A-MD</p>

## 7. Conclusions

**7.1** While both the reviewed action plan and the forward-looking plan once again have grown, the latter particularly needs to pick up areas of weakness so they can be addressed.

**7.2** These are:-

- Evaluating External Communications
- Feeding Back to customers following consultation
- Showing customers what a difference their feedback has made to improving services
- Targeting communities with specific messages

### **7.3 What does this mean for Bromsgrove District Council Communications?**

From the research considered in this review we know we have to:-

- Reach out to everyone with targeted communications
- Increase our customer access channels
- Make sure our Leader, Chief Executive, senior members and officers have a visible presence both externally and internally
- Work with partners to ensure cross-county communications are joined up and effectively communicated
- Get communities involved to have their say on how they want to be kept informed
- Motivate our staff
- Address the outcomes in the Place Survey 2009 and make a difference to the results in the CAA and next Place Survey

### **7.4 How do we move forward?**

Moving forward to realise these actions and those in the following action plan we need to build on and enhance the communications channels that already exist as well as creating more, e.g Facebook etc, in a bid to reach out to more people.

**7.5** It is worth remembering that a budget bid has been made to secure 'Mosaic' which will endeavour to help the Council segment its market and deliver targeted communications effectively. This has to complement communications already in existence, not replace them. Our aim for the year ahead is to Engage and Inform.

**7.6** The Place survey didn't give us the specific result that we have had previously so more evaluation is needed to give us a local picture of how informed people are about. So the fact that we aim to evaluate our communications more via focus groups and consultation should give us this.

- 7.7 We will continue to use customer and staff feedback to further improve our communications and indeed feedback from the future CAA inspection.
- 7.8 The research and development of the actions plans also shows a need for the community engagement strategy and this review to sit close together and both the communications and policy teams working together on producing robust consultation and feedback projects.
- 7.9 Shared Services has added another dimension and factor to this strategy review and indeed communications will play a vital role in implementing the process internally and externally.
- 7.10 However it is worth remembering that the process is not about political merger and the communications will also have to respect the uniqueness of each area as well as making the most of joint working opportunities as they arise.
- 7.11 **And Finally**  
The way forward will see our residents playing a key part in letting us know how they want to be communicated to so we can deliver the information how and where they want. We also need to close the loop on consultation exercises and tell people how their feedback made a difference. Working with partners is also another objective and all these actions will ensure we provide a stronger voice for everyone in the Bromsgrove District.

## 8. Contact

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## 9. References

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- Bromsgrove District Council In the Know Shared Services Internal Communications survey 2009
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- DCLG Communities in Control White Paper: real people, real power