

Harrow Council is Getting Better

Communications Plan April 2009 – May 2010



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1. Summary

1.1 The objective of the Council's corporate communications team is to improve the reputation of Harrow Council and the borough.

1.2 We will do this by demonstrating that Harrow Council is getting better, delivering cleaner and safer streets, building strong communities and supporting vulnerable people.

1.3 The communications unit will also promote the authority as a commonsense Council with a reputation for providing jargon free services at excellent value for money.

1.4 This will be achieved by delivering integrated marketing communication campaigns that improve information about Council services, help retain and recruit staff, and explain the goals of the authority to the public and government. (We refer to a 'campaign' to mean a linked series of activities designed to achieve an agreed objective).

1.5 All work will be delivered with regard to achieving high professional standards and measurable results for the benefit of the community.

1.6 This document sets out the medium-term work that the corporate communications team will deliver for the Council over 13 months from the start of April 2009 to the end of April 2010. This takes into consideration that in the weeks leading up to the local elections there will be a period of restricted activity.

1.7 It represents a comprehensive work plan to offer direction to the team and support the corporate and directorate business objectives of the Council. It will be evaluated against targets that envisage an increase in key measures such as resident perceptions of Council information and value for money.

2. Goals: Where does the Council want to be in April 2010?

2.1 Harrow Council wants to be recognised as the most improved Council in London.

2.2 Within this we want residents, as well as staff and stakeholders, to endorse the Council story and recognise that it is 'getting better'. We will also seek to promote the Council's improvement agenda amongst key organisations such as the Government, the Audit Commission, service inspectorates etc. In addition, we will co-ordinate an awards programme across the Council to demonstrate our improvement programme.

2.3 Promote understanding of, and engagement in, the Council's work amongst key groups, evidenced through the reputation tracker and MORI Place survey.

2.4 Extend access to the individual services through campaigns delivering measurable changes in behaviour and perceptions, as agreed with service departments.

2.5 Support the Council's work with partners by developing or adding value to joint initiatives and seeking commercial arrangements where they benefit the Council.

2.6 Ensure the communications team contributes to the corporate improvement programme by itself demonstrating value for money and improving customer service.

2.7 Deliver high standards in the delivery of communications in terms of clarity, accuracy, accessibility of communication, management of resources, and adherence to law.

3. Measurement:

3.1 Success in delivering our communications goals will contribute to the Council improving its overall satisfaction rating. The overall performance will be measured through the September 2009 MORI Place Survey. The results of which should be benchmarked in Mar/ Apr 2009 and then monitored every four months (ie July/Aug 09, Nov/Dec 09 and Mar/Apr 2010) by the Reputation Tracker.

3.2 Specifically, the communications team will be measured against the following:

- I. Help improve by +5% the number of residents who are satisfied overall with the Council (currently 58% in Nov 08 Reputation Tracker).
- II. Increase by +5% residents and staff informed about Council services and benefits (currently 47% in Nov 08 Reputation Tracker and 54% in staff survey 08).
- III. Increase by +5% the number of residents and staff who feel Harrow Council is getting better (currently 28% in Nov 08 Reputation Tracker).

3.3 In order to achieve the above measures, we will contribute to the following:

- I. Increase by +5% the number of residents who think the Council provides good value for money (currently 30% in Nov 08 Reputation Tracker).
- II. Improve service ratings by +5%, through campaigns that help improve service ratings or as agreed in our campaign plans.
- III. Increase by +5% the percentage of those who feel involved in local decision-making (from 22% in Nov 08 Reputation Tracker to 30%).

3.4 The corporate communications team want to be recognised as one of the best in London by March 2010. This professional ambition to deliver excellent results will be evaluated through the other success measures, additional qualitative feedback and award submissions. We will also support the Council's aim to go for the most improved Council in London title, by supporting relevant Council awards.

4.0 Research

There are a number of key facts to consider when communicating in Harrow:

4.1 Corporate Identity/ Brand

Satisfaction with the Council and advocacy of the Council increase amongst residents who have seen the Council logo on in-street recycling bins (by 4 percentage points in both cases). Advocacy increases by six percentage points amongst those who have seen Council mini buses.

Informed ratings about services and benefits is higher among residents who have seen the Council logo on town centre banners, local schools and staff uniforms by 10, seven and six percentage points respectively.

4.2 Key services

Residents tell us that fear of crime and street cleanliness are key factors in making an area a good place to live. The level of crime, roads and pavements and street cleanliness are seen to be the issues most in need of improvement.

Thirty percent of residents think the level of crime in Harrow is in need of improvement. Most likely to feel this is the case are those who are dissatisfied with the Council (41%), are critical of the Council (37%) and feel the Council does not give good value for money (35%). Increasing information around what is being done to combat the level of crime, such as the story about cracking down on knife sales to under 18s, could have a positive impact on these measures.

The November 08 Reputation Tracker also identified 'activities for young people' as a 'new entry' and was identified as the third most important factor in making an area a good place to live across all residents and the most important factor among those aged 16-24. We will first check whether this is a seasonal issue and if not then we will look at addressing this with a package of targeted activities for young people.

4.3 Community Cohesion and Ethnicity

There is a strong and compelling link with cohesion and satisfaction. Residents who agree the Council encourages good relations between different communities of the borough are more likely to be satisfied with the Council than those who do not think the Council encourages this (70% and 26%). Residents who feel the Council encourages good relations between different communities of the borough are also more likely to speak highly of the Council and feel the Council provides good value for money.

The Reputation Tracker also shows us that BME residents are far more positive than White residents. Namely, BME residents are typically +6% more likely to be satisfied with the Council and +11% more likely think Council services will get better over the next 12 months. On the contrary White residents are +6% more likely to be dissatisfied with the Council than BME residents and +13% more likely to be critical of the Council than BME residents.

4.4 Better Harrow message

Those who think that the Council's services have got better over the last 12 months are more likely to be satisfied with the Council and feel informed about Council services and benefits than other residents. Most likely to feel services have got better are those aged 16 to 24.

In October 2008, at the onset of the recession almost three quarters (72%) of residents thought that the economic condition of the country was going to get worse over the next few months. Those who think that the country will get worse are +4% more likely to be dissatisfied with the Council. With the credit crunch now turning into recession, these figures will therefore almost certainly rise and it is quite possible that economic pessimism could pervade all communication.

4.5 Value for money

The vast majority (87%) of residents are satisfied if they feel the Council offers good value for money. Residents who think the offers good value for money are also more likely to speak highly of the Council (48%) and are more likely to think that Council's services have got better in the last 12 months (53%) than residents as a whole. If we can therefore convince those living in Harrow that we are spending every pound wisely, then we should be able to increase satisfaction and also the number of people who believe that the Council services are improving.

4.6 Customer contact

Over a third (36%) of all residents say they have contacted the Council in the last two or three months. Residents who have contacted the Council are 10% less likely to be satisfied with the Council and 15% more likely to be a critic of the Council than those who have not contacted the Council. This may be as they are already dissatisfied and this is why they are contacting the Council in the first place. However, residents who were satisfied with the handling of their enquiry are +23% satisfied and +30% speak highly of the Council.

4.7 Ability to influence

Currently only one in five (22%) residents feels involved in local decision making. Those who feel informed about how to get involved in decision-making are more likely to be satisfied with the Council than those who do not know how to get involved (76% and 48%). Community engagement and consultation are therefore crucial and emphasis also needs to be placed on feeding back results.

4.8 Media:

Four out of five residents (77%) say that the London Borough of Harrow has been viewed either positively/neutrally by the media (excluding those who said they don't know). The stories which had the most positive effect on Council reputation overall were, about how the Council spends Council tax, free swimming for the under 16s and plans for the local area. In addition, residents who have heard of any of these stories are around 10% more likely to feel the Council gives local people good value for money.

5.0 Strategy

5.1 The strategy of the communications team is to deploy consistently pro-active and evidence based communications to protect and enhance the reputation of the Council, retain and recruit staff that are knowledgeable and experienced in their field, and win additional resources for the borough.

5.2 The large and diverse communities across Harrow, combined with the fast pace of life in London, means that the Council must deliver an intensive communications effort across a range of channels to reach our audiences. This means utilising direct communications such as Harrow People, supported by third-party endorsement through the media and face-to-face engagement with staff and the local community. We will achieve this through co-ordinated campaigns that change public perceptions and behaviour for the public good.

5.3 The primary audiences of the communications team are Harrow residents, service users, our local partners, Council staff, and elected members. The secondary audience is composed of community leaders, opinion formers, businesses, public agencies, and politicians who have an impact on the work of the Council. Tertiary audiences include other local Councils, visitors and commercial partners.

5.4 This strategic plan is based on the overall story that Harrow Council is delivering better streets, building strong communities and supporting vulnerable people. These will provide the basis for the twelve marketing communications campaigns which will all have defined goals and robust measurement agreed in advance. (See section 13 for more details on the individual campaigns.) Specifically, we will focus our campaigns in two ways:

- I. Targeting of key groups through localised marketing activity
- II. Demonstrating how the Council is acting on people's concerns

5.5 We will focus our effort on the key driver of resident satisfaction. These are:

- **Overall informed:** 71% of residents say they are satisfied with the Council if they feel well informed about Council services compared to 44% if uninformed.
- **Value for Money (VFM):** 87% are satisfied with the Council if they feel the Council offers good VFM.
- **Media:** 77% residents are satisfied if they feel the media has been positive/neutral.
- **Brand:** Satisfaction levels are around 3% to 4% higher among those who have seen the Council logo on bins, vehicles, banners and uniforms.
- **Decision making:** Those who feel informed about how to get involved in local decision-making are significantly more likely to be satisfied than those who are not (76% vs. 48%).
- **Cleaner and Safer Streets:** Top two most important and in most need of improvement. There is also a clear link between street and overall satisfaction.
- **Customer Service** - those residents are +23% satisfied and +30% likely to be an advocate of the Council if their contact with the Council has been successful.

5.6 Overall we deploy media relations tools to protect reputation, recruit staff and drive advocacy ratings. We use internal communications to retain staff, increase productivity and increase understanding of the goals of the leadership of the authority. We deploy marketing communications techniques to provide information on - and increase access to - our services. We manage public affairs campaigns to win additional resources and support for the Council.

5.7 The major outputs from April 2009 to March 2010 will be:

- 12 external corporate/service campaigns (3 paid for with additional resources) and all include staff engagement sections
- 8 editions of Harrow People
- A combined A-Z and Council Tax Guide, sent to all residents
- At least 2 editions of 'That' magazine
- Adult activities publication –either a Passport style guide or magazine.
- 2 internal communications campaigns
- 6 editions of the Arrow and 12 CEX Newsletter
- 12 staff and 4 manager forums
- 2 CREATE Award ceremonies and one well-being staff event
- Reputation Tracker Surveys (every four months)
- An average of 500 points per month for media scores

- At least two hits in the top media targets every month

5.8 We will also work jointly with the Police, PCT and other partnership bodies to demonstrate community leadership as part of the Audit Commission's new Corporate Area Assessment. Specifically, this will include internal communications around the CAA and external campaigns such as Safer Streets and Community Cohesion campaigns. This will be co-branded with the individual partnership corporate IDs.

6. Corporate Message

6.1 The results of our research show that when delivered with real service improvements to residents, the overall message that ‘Harrow Council is getting better’ will increase satisfaction with the Council. For instance, a resident who believes that our services are improving is five times more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied.

6.2 After careful research, our story is:

Harrow Council is working hard to provide good value local services. We know that money is tight at the moment but we are spending your money wisely and are focused on helping to make your lives better.

We are making Harrow better, cleaner and safer, building strong communities and supporting vulnerable people. This is underpinned by providing jargon-free Council services to all our customers for excellent value for money.

We want you to see your Council as one of the best in London, so we intend to make improvements in every area of our work, listening to your needs and reporting back on what we’ve changed.

6.3 In order for the narrative to have the desired impact, it needs to be executed across the Council and demonstrated through real service delivery improvements. These messages will be further developed in our work on the Corporate ID review. This will ask key questions such as: what does the Council stand for and what is its promise to customers (in its priorities, its service delivery and the way it works with customers). The behaviour of staff at Access Harrow will also be an important part of this work, and these areas will also be a key channel of communication with our customers.

7. Responsibilities

7.1 The main Communications Team leads for the key service areas are as follows, subject to the further development of the Communications Team:

- i. **Finance:** Andrew Hadfield, supported by Eden Black and Nicola Rae.
- ii. **Chief Executive and Legal:** Andrew Hadfield, supported by Nicola Rae and Alana Blair.
- iii. **Children's Services:** Fergus Sheppard, supported by Jenny Stott and Angela Hart.
- iv. **Adults & Housing:** Andrew Hadfield, supported by Jenny Stott and Angela Hart.
- v. **Community & Environment:** Fergus Sheppard, supported by Nicola Rae (Environment) and Undaleeb Qazi (Community).
- vi. **Place-Shaping:** Eden Black.
- vii. **Corporate Internal Communications:** Andrew Hadfield, supported by Jenny Stott and Undaleeb Qazi.

8. Organisation

8.1 The Team is led by Andrew Hadfield, Head of Communications, with Fergus Sheppard, as his deputy.

8.2 A managed expansion of the team has now been completed and we will need to now ensure that the new team has the relevant capacity and skills to deliver this 2009/10 workplan.

9. Making people better informed

As part of driving the overall number of residents who feel informed, we will:

- 9.1** Implement the new corporate narrative and deliver the overall 'getting better' message of the Council;
- 9.2** Deliver twelve marketing campaigns (3 paid for out of additional resources) to explain Harrow's priorities and enhance the profile of the borough;
- 9.3** Deliver regional and national media coverage, focused on key channels seeking to extend from purely 'news' to 'consumer' coverage within the main campaigns;
- 9.4** Regularly supply stories to the local media to ensure that they understand specific initiatives and the background to local policies. Extend the supply of press releases to other key stakeholders such as public agencies and major businesses;
- 9.5** Deliver 8 editions of Harrow People ensuring that it reflects campaign themes and key messages, reviewing the format and style and winning a 75% approval rating for the magazine from residents;
- 9.6** Produce a reputation tracker three times per year (every four months) so that and we know changes in residents' perceptions over time, ensure that our communications is based on evidence and is then targeted to the most effective channels;
- 9.7** Conduct more detailed research to communicate better with those uninformed residents who say that they want to receive more leaflets and direct mail.

10. Getting staff engaged

10.1 Many of our staff are also residents of the borough and will receive all the messages and communications outlined in this plan. In this sense, staff communications are integral to the success of our overall plans and objectives. We will therefore develop an internal communications element to all our marketing campaigns.

10.2 We will also produce a separate internal communications plan to address specific staff communications and engagement. This will be aimed at explaining and delivering the corporate story, reducing jargon as well as at least two additional campaigns.

10.3 The key goals will be to ensure that 55% of staff are clear about the corporate priorities (currently 45%) and that 65% of staff say they are “informed” (currently 54%).

10.4 The strategy to achieve this will be to focus activity on those staff who currently feel least informed. This will be developed through a separate internal communications plan and will be based on the mini staff survey that will take place in early 2009. This will then be repeated two or three times per year to test the impact of this work programme.

10.5 The programme will build on the existing and effective internal communications channels, such as the Arrow, Chief Executive’s regular staff newsletter and lunches, staff forums and managers’ conferences. We will also

- Develop and refresh the staff social newsletter called the ‘grapevine’; and
- Work with individual Corporate Directorates to improve internal communications within departments so that information is properly cascaded.
- Organise two CREATE Award ceremonies and one Council-wide ‘Better Harrow’ competition or well-being activity aimed at increasing staff morale.

11. Delivery of the corporate programme

To help deliver the communications plan, the corporate Communications Team will:

11.1 Maintain and develop the communications planning process whereby departments identify communication needs for the new financial year, and agree priority service campaigns and corporate goals, evidenced and with clear outcome measures, such as increasing recycling rates.

11.2 Continue to update the comprehensive communications grid aligning internal and external communications, within clear targets for one regional (i.e. London-wide) media story a week and one national story a month.

11.3 Review the use of the corporate identity and manage its proper use to ensure that Council services are recognised by local taxpayers.

11.4 Circulate a restructured Daily Issues note around the three new corporate priorities to leading officers and members. We will also instigate a quarterly review process summarising progress against the plan and checking against upcoming activity is relevant.

11.5 Use the Council's Experian data, Management Information Systems and Customer Relationship Management to supplement the Reputation tracker and enable us to better target our communications to geographic areas or communities of interest.

11.6 Update the Council's photo library focussed around the corporate message and the three new corporate priorities. This will be completed by April and then made available on the hub by the end of May as part of the Corporate ID project.

12. Corporate/Service campaigns

12.1 The Communications Team will research, plan, deliver and evaluate twelve communications campaigns over the next 12 months from April 2009 – March 2010. These campaigns will support the overall corporate narrative that 'Harrow Council is getting better' and the three 2009/10 corporate priorities.

12.2 The proposed campaigns are based on corporate and directorate service plans and have been developed in consultation with lead Members and Directors. Priority has also been given to areas of the Council's work that residents have said are most important.

12.3 All campaigns should help the Council meet its key targets on value for money and customer satisfaction as benchmarked against the MORI Place survey and the Council's own Reputation Tracker.

12.4 A full programme of work and delivery schedule will be developed, working to the following:

Priority	Goal	Activity
1	Behavioural and/ or perception change	Full media, marketing and internal communication support over a period of 6-9 months to secure a specific change in the behaviour of the target audience. Campaign led by senior comms manager supported by other officers.
2	Perception change	Media and marketing activity over a sustained period of 3-6 months, normally with the goal to achieve a change in the perceptions of the target audience. Led by a marketing officer with support from an assistant.
3	Service information	Marketing activity, with limited media support over a 1-2 month period to highlight service. Run by one officer reporting to service department.
4	Raise awareness	Regular media publicity (ie once a month) or event support. Run by one officer reporting to service department.

12.6 The draft list of recommended campaigns and objectives are below. Once agreed campaign plans will be worked up to support each campaign and setting out the objectives, strategy, implementation and evaluation. Each campaign will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to assess progress and to discuss any emerging issues that may lead to a redeployment of resources as priorities change.

12.7 Below is a summary of recommended campaigns by priority:

Priority	Goal	Campaign	Lead directorate	Portfolio holder
1	Behavioural and/ or perception change	Better Harrow	CEX Dept	Cllr Paul Osborn
		Safer streets	Environment	Cllr Susan Hall
		Cleaner streets	Environment	Cllr Susan Hall
2	Perception change	Value for Money	Finance	Cllr David Ashton
		Common sense	CEX Dept	Cllr Paul Osborn
		Community cohesion	Community	Cllr Chris Mote
		Every Child Matters	Children's Services	Cllr Bednell/ Cllr Patel
		Adult well-being	Adults and Housing	Cllr Macleod -Cullinane
3	Improve knowledge of service provision	Free swimming	Community	Cllr Chris Mote
		Recycling	Environment	Cllr Susan Hall
4	Promotion or event support	Planning	Place Shaping	Cllr Marilyn Ashton
		Housing	Adults and Housing	Cllr Macleod -Cullinane

Comms Priority	Corporate Priority	Goal(s) or Driver of Satisfaction	Potential activity	Audience
1	Better Harrow	Increase number of residents and staff who feel Council is improving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement message structure through guidance document and revised Corporate ID. • Co-ordinate awards programme. • 'A day in the life' media sub-campaign about frontline staff. • 'I love Harrow' or 'Better Harrow' creative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All residents • Focus on uninformed wards and those who have contacted the Council.
1	Cleaner and Safer streets	Reduce the Fear of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how tackling local crime and making streets safer. • Joint campaign with Police • Local data and targeted activity by street or ward. Direct mail after police/ Council activity including Week's of Action. • Did you know ...e.g. CPZ consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninformed residents • Use Experian data to focus on specific streets.
1	Cleaner and Safer streets	Increase perception of clean streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff uniforms vehicle branding • Street voucher scheme • Pavement/ road repairs • Decluttering street furniture • 'You said, we did' direct mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed residents • Use Experian data to focus on specific streets.
2	Value for Money	Increase satisfaction and value for money ratings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular fortnightly media activity demonstrating how we are getting better e.g. economic recovery plan. • Consultative element – external innov8 campaign: how can we get even better? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All residents • Focus on uninformed wards and those who have contacted the Council.
2	Build stronger communities	Increase the number of people who think that residents get on well together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate community cohesion campaign funded by Community Development and Harrow Strategic Partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See separate campaign plan.

2	Customer services	Increase satisfaction with customer contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Common sense Council. Jargon free aim by 2012. Demystify arcane procedures laid bare and open up Council in unprecedented ways. Key activities could include Council chamber taken over by young people, farmers market in car park. Banning emails for a day or first portable Question time 'gavel to go'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uninformed residents Those who contact the Council.
2	Increase support for vulnerable (young) people	<p>Increase understanding of safeguarding young people.</p> <p>Increase awareness of activities for young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall theme of 'Every Child Matters' split into three key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding – proactive work done by social workers and partners to protect vulnerable. Potential conference on how Harrow is leading in key areas. Youth Engagement – media focus on the positive activities that young people do in the community. Activities – summer activities promoted either in a 'Passport for young people' or featured in a special edition of 'That magazine'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-24year olds as well as 45 - 60 years old parents.
2	Increase support for vulnerable (adults) people	Increase choice, well-being and safety of Adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the services that may be available to you. Help to increase the number of people who take up personalised budgets. Demonstrate leadership in London. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities for adults including free swimming and potential 'Passport' or older person's magazine. Joint campaign with PCT. Demonstrating how we protect vulnerable people. Consultative element – what you can do if you spot something that has happened to a vulnerable person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current service users 60+ year old residents (as well as specific other at need groups) All residents
3	Cleaner and Safer streets	Increase recycling to 50%+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate funds identified but not yet agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See separate campaign plan.
3	Build stronger communities	Increase awareness of activities for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote free swimming initiative for Under -16s and Over -60s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See campaign plan and additional resources.
4	Build stronger communities	Increase informed ratings and number of people who feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monthly proactive media relations only. How (strategic) planning works' to protect open spaces and parks. Also 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents

		they can influence local decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lobbying against 'garden grabbing'. Consultation around future of Harrow as a place. Promote Harrow's Heroes volunteering event. Suggestion boxes in libraries and plasma screens to 'have your say'. Promotion of ward based surgeries and supported localised services. Question time in community centres across the borough. 	
4	Supporting vulnerable people	Increase tenant satisfaction with Housing service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monthly proactive media relations only. This will include at least one story in advance of each Tenants and Leaseholder's Consultative Forum. Support 'Estates in Bloom' competition (would require additional marketing resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants