

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	18 March 2010
Subject:	Communications Plan 2010/11
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Paul Osborn, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Communications Plan 2010/11 Appendix 2: Reference from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report identifies the need to extend the current communications plan to continue the improvement of the service.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the attached Communications Plan.
2. Delegate to the Assistant Chief Executive the authority to negotiate the delivery of this plan with Westminster City Council within the communications contract that was agreed in 2009.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure the council continues to inform residents about its services and activities which will contribute to increasing their overall satisfaction and improving the council's reputation with key stakeholders and staff.

Introduction:

This plan builds on the achievements of the corporate communications team to improve the reputation of the Council over the past few years.

Significant sections of this plan remain the same as last year which is in recognition that we are heading in the right overall direction and focussing on the key drivers of satisfaction. We will therefore be seeking to make iterative improvements on key channels as well as focussing on fewer, more intense campaigns to deliver larger results. This will include raising the bar on Harrow People, media relations and better utilisation of the website and community noticeboards.

In addition, we will be launching a number of new, cutting edge communications to directly drive up our external reputation and internal satisfaction. This will include targeted marketing through Experian data and direct mail, launch a new e-newsletter for residents and generally promoting the free activities and services we provide. For staff we will work on directorate newsletters and cascade information via 1st line managers and more face to face briefings.

Options considered:

This plan has been drafted to help drive up the Council's reputation, following consultation with the Chief Executive and the Corporate Directors from across the council, Leader and Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Communications. Their views have been incorporated in to the final plan as have those given by the cross-party Communications Working Group.

The majority of Directors and Portfolio Holders have been asked for their feed back of the work done to date and the draft plan has been scrutinised through the officer led, Corporate Strategic Board.

The plan also significantly uses data from the latest Reputation Tracker and Staff Survey as well as Experian Mosaic Data. In addition, qualitative work carried out through focus groups and further consultation on the Council's three corporate priorities which have also been incorporated in to this document.

The 2010/11 Communications Plan will be delivered within the current contract Westminster City Council's trading arm Westco Ltd. The purpose of this contract is to enable Harrow Council to deliver the Communications Service through a four year framework agreement, from May 2009 until 2013, which includes a two year break clause in May 2011. It sets out the contractual terms and conditions which enables both parties to amend and negotiate the exact service specification each year. This is implemented through the annual communications plan. When reviewing the contract in May 2009, Harrow Council considered shorter and longer term options but agreed this process as it combines both contractual stability on resources but also the flexibility to amend the specific outputs in order to delivery the overall objectives.

The council's main partners, the Police and Primary Care Trust, have been informed about the overall plan as well as holding more detailed discussions around specific joint campaigns.

Current situation:

Since May 2007, the Communications Team have contributed to:

- An improvement in net resident satisfaction of 18%.
- A net improvement in the perception of value for money by 7%
- A 24% increase in net informed rating for services and benefits

Since October 2008, the communications team have helped to:

- A 17 point net improvement more residents feel they can influence local decision making
- A 9 point net rise in people from different backgrounds who feel they get on well together
- Over 10% more residents have seen the council branding on refuse vehicles or street sweepers and their pushcarts.

Since May 2008, results for the latest Staff Survey show that:

- Increased overall satisfaction by 11%
- 21% rise in net informed level
- Increased information about the council vision by 9%
- 12% increase in those who would advocate Harrow Council as a place to work.

Research:

Based on the latest Reputation Tracker, the council has analysed the key drivers of resident satisfaction. These are:

- **Overall informed:** 73% of residents say they are satisfied with the Council if they feel well informed about Council services compared to 35% if uninformed.
- **Better services:** Those residents who think the Council's services have got better over the past twelve months are significantly more likely to be satisfied those who think it has got worse.
- **Value for Money:** 85% are satisfied with the Council if they feel the Council offers good VFM.
- **Media:** 70% are satisfied if they feel the media has been positive/neutral.
- **Brand:** Satisfaction levels are around 5% higher among those who have seen the Council logo on vehicles, street sweeper uniforms and their pushcarts.
- **Decision making:** Those who feel informed about how to get involved in local decision-making are around a third more likely to be satisfied with the council than those not informed.

Strategy:

The communications strategy concentrates on increasing satisfaction by targeting our communications to those residents who are moderately dissatisfied, tend to disagree that the Council provides good value for money or think they receive only limited information. Specifically, we will focus our work in:

- Targeting of segmented groups through localised marketing activity
- Demonstrating how the Council is acting on people's concerns
- Informing residents about specific 'better for less' services and benefits
- Building the Council's reputation and profile through the most important media.

Implementation:

External:

- Improve quality and consistency of Council branding
- Six editions of a refreshed Harrow People
- A combined A-Z and Council Tax Guide sent to all residents
- Special edition of 'THAT' magazine to promote summer activities for young people.
- An average of 600 points per month for media scores (including one trade hit per week)
- At least two hits in the top media targets every month and an 80% pos/neutral score.

- Develop more targeted marketing activities with Experian information including direct mail
- Launch new e-newsletter as well as improved use of targeted email
- Promote new 'online banking style' services and refresh main web home page
- Re-launch the new community noticeboards
- New 'Harrow Leaders' community engagement and advocate programme

Internal:

- Twelve CEX Newsletters and four special editions of The Arrow (focused on key campaigns)
- Twelve staff and four manager forums as well as two staff recognition 'CREATE' awards
- More focused communications with targeted departments with specific newsletters where relevant and face to face briefings.

Below is a summary of recommended campaigns by priority:

Comms Priority	Campaign	Goal(s) or Driver of Satisfaction	Potential activity	Audience
1	Better Harrow	Increase number of residents and staff who feel Council is improving. Increase satisfaction with customer contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation programme • 'A day in the life' focus on frontline services and staff. • Branding - focus on quality, introduce new authorisation form for printed material. • Recession busting activity to help make residents lives better and promote the economic recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All residents • Focus on uninformed wards and those who have contacted the Council.
1	Value for Money	Increase perception of providing good value for money	<p>One clear theme 'Have you heard...' Within this two key strands: cut waste; inform the number of services we provide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot new outbound e-newsletter • 'Have you heard' guide direct mailed [subject to additional funds] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Segments A-C
1	Cleaner and Safer streets	Increase perception of clean streets Reduce the Fear of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main focus Neighbourhood Champions • Increased use of direct mail after police/ Council activity on issues such as anti-burglary dye. • Specific Project Plan for promoting Week's of Action. • Utilise police channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninformed residents • Use Experian data to focus on specific streets.
2	Increase support for vulnerable (young) people	Increase awareness of activities for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall theme of 'School at the heart of the community' focussing on new facilities and activities available. • New Whitmore High School, Sixth Forms, Children Centres and school meals. • Change in the Age of Transfer • Activities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-24year olds via their parents ie 45 - 60 years old residents.
2	Increase support for	Increase health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint campaign with PCT [subject to agreement of additional funds]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Segment C

	vulnerable people	amongst adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities for adults including free swim and potential 'Passport' or Vitality Views. 	(Experian Research) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service users
3	Build stronger communities	Increase number of people who feel they can influence local decision-making; and plans for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation around future of Harrow. Question Time in community centres across the borough. Community Action Days and use of new video booth technology Harrow Leaders Sub-campaign Promote Harrow's Heroes volunteering and Under One Sky events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents Focus on neutralising critics.

Financial Implications

This plan can be delivered within approved budgets for 2010/11. The existing contract allows for the continuation until May 2013 with a two year break clause available in May 2011.

Performance Issues

The overall aim of the communications team will be to increase net satisfaction with council to 40% (+5% on December Reputation Tracker) by 2011.

We will do this by focussing on the key drivers of satisfaction which will be measured against increasing the following three key areas:

- **Residents:**
 - the net number of people who feel informed about council services and benefits (+5% on December Reputation Tracker)
 - the net number of people who think we provide good value for money (+7 on December Reputation Tracker)
- **Stakeholders:**
 - the number of net advocates in the community (+9% on the December Reputation Tracker)
 - the net number of residents who think that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (+10% on the December Reputation Tracker)
- **Staff:**
 - the net number of staff who are satisfied (+4%)
 - the net number who feel informed (+7% on the November Staff Survey)

Environmental Impact:

Consideration has been given to ensuring that all publications are produced in line with recyclable materials. The corporate communications team will also, where appropriate, encourage staff not to print off publications such as the Chief Executive newsletter. The plan also seeks to promote a number of environmental projects including cleaner streets as well as recycling.

Risk Management Implications:

The main risk is that the council fails to agree a communications plan for 2010/11 and therefore does not build on the progress made during the past few years. A risk register is included in appendix of the main plan.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Steve Tingle on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 16/02/10

Name: George Curran on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer

Date: 16/02/10

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap Divisional Director
Partnership,
Date: 16/02/10 Development and
Performance

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards Divisional Director
(Environmental
Date: 16/02/10 Services)

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Andrew Hadfield, Head of Communications, 020 8424 1292

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

*(for completion by Democratic
Services staff only)*

NOT APPLICABLE