

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET REPORT  
16 October 2018**

**REPORT  
AUTHOR:** COUNTY COUNCILLOR JAMES EVANS  
( PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE  
GOVERNANCE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION)

**SUBJECT:** Communications Plan

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for the Draft Communications and Engagement Plan September 2018- September 2019 (Appendix 1), the new operating model contained therein, and the Gold and Silver communications and engagement campaign programme set out in the plan. The draft plan follows the Review of Communications and Engagement by leading public sector Communications and Engagement specialist, Peter Holt, of Alexander Herald that took place between Feb-March and was presented to Cabinet/Management Team in May 2018.

1.2 The review was undertaken across the whole council to ensure resources are appropriately aligned to deliver the Cabinet's Vision 2025 and other corporate priorities, as well as benchmarking the service with other comparable councils for best practice and value for money. The full review report can be found at Appendix 2.

**2. Proposal**

2.1 The proposal is to provide a comprehensive response to the independent review of communications and engagement by adopting the Communications and Engagement Plan September 2018 – September 2019 (Appendix 1), subject to any feedback from Scrutiny. It is proposed that the plan is reviewed annually and the campaign programme adjusted to reflect top priority issues as appropriate.

2.2 To recap, the external review of communications and engagement examined how well we perform as a council in this key function across twelve key lines of enquiry:

- Media relations
- Campaigns

- Events
- Engagement and consultation
- Digital
- Internal communications
- Welsh Language
- Equalities and hard-to-reach audiences
- Design and branding
- Commercialisation
- Capability, experience, qualifications, skills, knowledge
- Team organisation, structure, finance, operating systems

2.3 Encouragingly, the review found a great deal of effective communication performance, systems and campaigns, as well as around major events - and in particular, an experienced, creative, dedicated, well-qualified and well-led corporate communication team.

2.4 The clear conclusion of the review was that **Powys overall compares very well against other UK local authorities in its approach to communications**, with most changes advanced perhaps best characterised as continuous improvement opportunities rather than fixing any fundamental flaws.

2.5 A good number of clear opportunities and options for improvement in communications were also identified across many of the key lines of enquiry. The Communications and Engagement Plan sets out how the Communications and Engagement Team, and the organisation, will take forward actions to address the recommendations for improvement. The improvement actions are referenced throughout the plan and a complete list can be found at the end of the plan.

2.6 One of the main recommendations of the Communications Review was for the re-prioritisation of the Communication and Engagement Team's work to further align to the organisation's priorities and the introduction of a three-tier approach to how future campaigns would be supported. As a result, a system of Gold, Silver and Bronze campaigns will be introduced and this is where the Communications Team will put its focus.

2.7 These Gold and Silver campaigns are determined by Cabinet/Management Team and agreed annually (see Section 2 of the plan for the 2018 schedule of campaigns). Lower priority, or more service orientated communications, known as Bronze level communications activity or campaigns, will be the responsibility of service areas with advice and guidance from the central team.

2.8 The new operating model and campaign based approach may require services to fund some of the communications activity based on campaign requirements. This already happens for the council's key service campaigns eg Waste funds any direct mail, leaflets etc required to promote major changes to the rollout/collections. In general terms the existing staff resource

within the Communications team will be sufficient to deliver the programme of campaigns but additional costs for leaflets, advertising and other campaign costs are not. Services will need to identify funding to support these additional costs. Some services have identified funding in respect of the 2018/19 programme of campaigns but not all. Discussions for each individual campaign will consider cost and the campaign requirements can be amended as required based on the funding available. Services should be aware that inadequate funding of campaigns will necessarily limit the range of communications activity that can be undertaken.

### **3. Options Considered / Available**

3.1 Option 1 – Business as usual. This option would see the team and organisation seek to make small improvements by adopting a range of the recommendations from the review on a piecemeal basis. This would generate some small improvements over time to a team that has been recognised as performing well. However, a key finding of the review was the need to focus the Communications and Engagement Team’s efforts on the council’s top priority issues. This option would miss the opportunity to take a more strategic approach.

3.2 Option 2 – Communications and Engagement Plan and new operating model. This option would see a comprehensive response to all the recommendations in the Communications Review, a new operating model and the introduction of a campaign based approach to align the team’s work to the council’s top priorities. This is a new way of working for the Communications and Engagement team. The review identified this way of working as essential to allow the team to distinguish key council “storylines” from the large volume of general messaging. This option would allow the council to take a more strategic approach to communications, however, it entails services undertaking more direct communications themselves with support from the Communications and Engagement Team. This “business partner” approach is well developed in other service areas such as HR and Finance, but would take a period to become established. The new operating model and programme of campaigns requires behaviour change by all and will not be successful if it is not supported by the organisation ie if the team is still expected to carry out significant ad hoc communications activity in addition to the identified campaign programme.

### **4. Preferred Choice and Reasons**

4.1 Option 2 is the preferred option as it will allow the council to take a more strategic approach to communications and engagement by targeting the professional resource on agreed priorities.

4.2 Good communications and engagement helps bring about positive change. By aligning our communications and engagement activities to the

priorities and objectives of the organisation we can provide timely and relevant information to allow people to make effective choices.

## **5. Impact Assessment**

5.1 Adopting the Communications and Engagement Plan, new operating model and campaign based approach will have an impact on service areas. Any work that is deemed Bronze Level Activity (see report) will be supported by the team but not necessarily carried out by the team. For example, a service area project requiring some communications or engagement output such as a press release or promotion through the corporate social media feed will contact their Comms and Engagement Team representative to arrange promotion, but the service would be responsible for other aspects of the “softer” communications and engagement activity such as notifying staff, partners, TUs etc.

5.2 A range of self-service tools have been developed to help services such as the Communications and Engagement Toolkit, proforma’s, guidance documents etc. A training module has also been developed and tested by the team. This is a half-day module that covers all aspects of basic Communications and Engagement planning using the nationally recognised ROSIE methodology. Team representatives will provide the training for services as required.

## **6. Corporate Improvement Plan**

6.1 The Communications and Engagement plan is aligned to the council’s Corporate Improvement plan and Vision 2025 by focussing the council’s professional resource on key priorities within the plan taking a campaign based approach. In addition, communications and engagement activity takes account of:

- The Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework
- The council’s three core improvement plans for Children’s Services, Adult Services and Leadership and Governance

## **7. Local Member(s)**

7.1 There are no specific implications for any individual Local Members, however, a wide range of councillors engaged in the review process.

## **8. Other Front Line Services**

8.1 The impact on services is covered in section 5 above.

## **9. Communications**

9.1 Following decision it is proposed to do a “soft internal relaunch” of the team to describe the new operating model, campaign programme, support available and methods of self-serve.

## **10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)**

10.1 Legal : The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view.

10.2 Finance – The Finance Business Partner can confirm that the staff resource is contained within the Communications budget. Other service areas will need to work with the Communication team at an individual campaign level to look at the availability of funding to support the campaign requirements.

10.3 Corporate Property (N/A)

10.4 HR (N/A)

10.5 ICT (N/A)

## **11. Scrutiny**

Has this report been scrutinised? No. However, it went to Joint Chairs for consideration in September 2018 and delivery against the plan will be reviewed by Scrutiny in 2019.

## **12. Statutory Officers**

12.1 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer ) commented as follows :  
“ I note the legal comments and have nothing to add to the report.”

12.1 The Head of Financial Services (Deputy Section 151 Officer) notes the comment from the Finance Business Partner.

## **13. Members' Interests**

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<p>To adopt the Communications and Engagement Plan as set out in Appendix 1 to the report including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New operating model</li> <li>2. Campaign based approach (Gold and Silver campaign programme to be reviewed annually)</li> <li>3. Promotion of self-serve options and internal re-launch of team</li> </ol>	<p>To provide a comprehensive response to the recommendations of the Communications and Engagement Review and provide a more strategic approach to communications and engagement.</p>

<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>	
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Within Budget:</b>	<b>Y</b>

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	<b>N/A</b>
----------------------------------	------------

<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	<b>Anya Richards</b>
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	<b>Recommendations from review subject to different implementation dates set out in the plan</b>

<b>Is a review of the impact of the decision required?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If yes, date of review</b>	
<b>Person responsible for the review</b>	
<b>Date review to be presented to Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet for information or further action</b>	

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Anya Richards</b>
<b>Tel:</b>	<b>07877082644</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>anya.richards@powys.gov.uk</b>

**Background Papers used to prepare Report: Communications Review attached at Appendix 2**