

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 3 December 2019

Subject: Communications Service Plan – Review

Report of: City Solicitor and Director of Strategic Communications

Summary

This report provides an update on the delivery of the Communications Strategy for 2019/20. It outlines progress against the key delivery themes for Council communications of integrated working with partners, digital delivery, participation and engagement and service organisation and governance. It describes the next steps for the remainder of the year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

As part of the service plan for the year ahead, Communications are responsible for the delivery of behaviour influencing campaigns to support zero carbon for residents, staff, the city's businesses and with partners.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Strategic Communications service plan is driven by the Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan. The campaigns and communications activities included within the plan are designed to support the delivery of these outcomes, by raising awareness, increasing engagement or influencing behaviours.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Communications service plan outlines the communications activity including campaigns that the service will deliver for the year ahead and is used to allocate communications budget and staffing resources.
- 1.2 The plan outlines the continuing change of emphasis away from a reliance on local and regional print media towards an approach based on engagement with local residents, businesses and influencers - of which local and regional media are a part - to achieve the Council's vision and the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 1.3 The Corporate Plan sets out the priorities for the next two years, which include young people, healthy and cared for people, housing, neighbourhoods, connections, growth that benefits everyone and a well-managed council. Support from strategic communications lies at the heart of every one of these.
- 1.4 The proposed priorities for the Communications service reflect what our residents have told us is important, how communications will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy, and key business priorities gathered from across the Council.
- 1.5 There are four areas of focus for communications for 19/20. Each area has improvement projects that will support the successful delivery of the plan for the organisation. They are:
 - Integrated working
 - Digital delivery
 - Participation and engagement
 - Service organisation and governance
- 1.6 This paper provides a progress update for the year to date, including an overview of each of the improvement projects for the four areas of focus.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This year is the final year of the current three year Communications Strategy. This outlined a number of core objectives for the service, they were:
 - To develop a communications function that supports Council priorities based on an engagement model of communications - not traditional marketing,
 - To deliver communications that recognise Manchester's diverse audiences, targeted to their needs and preferences rather than blanket activity,
 - To develop communications that use and recognise the tools and voices available to us - listening and working with others, particularly supporting staff with the tools to act as advocates for the Council and city

- To develop the Communications service further as a centre of excellence that:
 - Protects and enhances the reputation of the Council and city
 - Supports council-wide priorities first
 - Is seen as a market leader in the delivery of strategic and operational communications
 - Delivers where appropriate through strong partnerships

3.0 Our progress in 2019/20

3.1 Integrated working

3.2 The Communications Plan outlined the aim to work more closely with NHS partners, with some co-located teams based in the town hall extension, closer alignment of management teams and joint areas of strategy and delivery. This was to expand joint working from the delivery of the Locality Plan communications into more day to day activities.

3.3 There are now shared outcomes on delivery of communications activity which are now in the forward plan. For example, supporting the Suicide Prevention campaign and Smoking Cessation campaign. The joint management team arrangement ensures clarity and accountability for the delivery of projects. This has expanded from director level across the Council, MHCC and the Council and is now embedded across management teams and into delivery teams.

3.4 Digital delivery

3.5 In line with the Communications Strategy, the focus continues to be on developing consistently engaging content, which lands well with the different audiences targeted, and increases levels of trust and confidence in the Council as a service provider.

3.6 Best practice demonstrates that this is best done by being a part of the strong local community networks, with content and tone of voice that is relevant to those groups. This year, the emphasis has moved to working alongside community and hyperlocal groups. The team are part of or have joined a number of influential community groups as pilots across each part of the city.

3.7 Groups that we have actively worked alongside in this pilot phase are 'Wythenshawe 1' which has approximately 29k members, 'Levy Massive' which has approximately 20k members and 'Manchester Mums' which has approximately 24k members. This work has included building relationships with group admins to share or amplify messages. This has led to early success and feedback around increased attendance at local events (for example bonfire night where attendance increased a third from last year - the highest since 2014).

- 3.8 A more appropriate digital evaluation tool to measure the impact of our media activity has been developed. This approach means we are not just measuring reach, but translating that into outcomes affected by online activity. For example, the take up of support or accessing information for those affected by the national changes to welfare support or attendance at events. Used properly, this will complement the current measurement and evaluation of the marketing activity delivered across other Council digital channels.
- 3.9 A key programme for digital delivery this year has been to introduce the digital engagement tool Granicus. This is an integrated email marketing solution. The changes brought about by GDPR and the removal of non-compliant data meant the reduction in the reach of the Council's e-bulletin went from over 100,000 to less than 5,000. The focus is on rebuilding engaged groups of audiences, where relevant information can be shared with them.
- 3.10 The GovDelivery platform from Granicus is public-sector specific and will improve how we connect and engage with our audiences. Over 13 million people in the UK are already signed up to receive updates from organisations using GovDelivery. We are now implementing this new email marketing platform to support our objectives around engagement and communication with our residents, businesses and stakeholders.
- 3.11 The flexibility the system offers will enable us to target our emails to specific segmented audiences, including staff. Examples of how we could use this system in the future could include weather warnings, bin day email alerts, automated payment reminders and alerts to drive channel shift and reduce demand on services.
- 3.12 This will enable us to target the right message to the right group of people at the right time so they can use it to make better choices, Communications can make better use of segmentation, and improve the frequency and quality of engagement with citizens in order to influence behaviours. The ambition is that this will lead to savings as there is a reduction in reliance on other more expensive methods of communications. The team are on target to have the first newsletters and activities through Granicus in the new year.
- 3.13 A further digital priority is to lead on the development and delivery of a new intranet. Far from being an IT tool, the new intranet will be focussed predominantly on use by remote and non-PC based staff, to transform the way that those groups engage with the council and search for and receive relevant information they need for their work. It is also a key element of the Our Transformation project, enabling new and more productive ways of working for staff. The new intranet is scheduled to be live at the end of March and will include:
- The ability to share images, video and audio content
 - The ability to elicit feedback and hold conversations about core projects and messages
 - A working staff directory that will support the ability to personalise content and send notifications to co-workers

- Forms to support self-service

3.14 The Intranet Project Manager is currently working with key content leads from each of the directorates to develop the content needed for the new intranet, this will use the same principles that govern the content on our external facing internet. Content will be task oriented, focusing on what staff use most. The team are also working on navigation, the user journey that will deliver the right content as quickly as possible.

3.15 A new training programme is being developed that will be rolled out to content authors. The training will be delivered by the Communications team, authors will be shown how to use the intranet CMS as well as best practice for content creation and accessibility guidance.

3.16 Participation and engagement

3.17 Building on the success of last year's Our Manchester Day takeovers, the team has refined the approach to highlighting the fantastic work taking place day-in-day-out across the organisation on Council digital channels. There is a programme in place of appropriately timed outcome focussed takeover slots allowing a greater level of focus on a wider range of projects, events, and issues. Takeover days this year have included: clean air and air quality, skills for life and Allsorts To Do (widening access and participation in the Council's culture and sports offer).

3.18 These planned takeover days are themed on priority areas and the services actively encourages services, partners, residents and businesses to get involved, engage and make their own content. For example, there are improvements in engagement and participation in school holiday activities, particularly the free swimming offer to 16-year-old and under. With the support across ward twitter accounts and from community networks, the delivery of local content to local people is driving this change. Figures highlight free swimming participation increased by 53% in the Easter holidays and 17% during May half term in comparison to last year.

3.19 Engaging with Council staff is also vital. This year the Internal Communications team, working with the Our Manchester programme office and HROD have refreshed the Listening in Action staff event. Based on staff feedback, the sessions were approached in a different way. Whilst being slightly shorter in length there are now more workshops, themed by the priorities in our Corporate Plan, so that staff have the opportunity to be heard more. The sessions feel more intimate and informal, giving staff the chance to have meaningful discussions with senior leaders. These changes have given senior officers and members a platform to be more visible to staff, to get more involved and to really focus on listening.

3.20 The change in approach has received positive feedback from both staff and senior leaders. In the latest round, five new sessions for sixty staff in each session have been delivered. Each session was fully booked in days. New materials and content with five new Our Manchester case study films have

been produced, showcasing staff working in an Our Manchester way to achieve meaningful outcomes for residents.

3.21 Finally for participation and engagement, the service supported the organisation and the Elections service in three elections - local, European and currently with the general election with campaigns on voter registration and calls to vote. For example, as part of our work on the European parliamentary elections the service built a new responsive design website to latest accessibility guidance; updating northwestvotes.gov.uk website so candidates and agents had information they required. The team co-ordinated information to the media and oversaw responses to all media enquiries across all 39 local authority areas.

3.22 As part of the Brexit process the service has fed into regional messaging as well as appropriate local messages for residents and businesses signposting to relevant information. A major part of this has been supporting the campaign for EU nationals to apply for settled status.

3.23 Service organisation and governance

3.24 This area of work is focused on three areas:

- Building on strengths of staff and services
- Planning and evaluation
- Commercialisation strategy

3.25 Building on strengths of staff and services – it is recognised that Council services and staff are our greatest asset and often a most trusted communication channel. To build on these strengths, Communications are identifying areas where messaging can be shared with staff to help promote activity by word of mouth or using local and service based channels. Communications have worked with services to support, train and empower them to create their own content and manage their own good news through the delivery of training, toolkits, mentoring and ongoing coaching. 19 people have been through this training since April 2019. Social media training and guidance has been completed with colleagues from five Sure Start centres, with more sessions to come. Social Media mentoring is ongoing with colleagues from Neighbourhood teams. Granicus training has started with Libraries staff, with more training planned with key services as part of implementation.

3.26 Communications have now embedded a bespoke planning tool and evaluation toolkit for our major projects to ensure that activity supports the Council priorities. This was introduced in March 2019 and focuses on outcomes rather than outputs. The tool is attached as appendix 2 for information.

3.27 Commercialisation strategy - The design studio is an award winning service using their growing reputation to attract additional commercial opportunities. A new commercial strategy for this service is in development to ensure we understand the real cost of competing for outside work, the impact on other

priorities, and the value to the organisation. This year the team has already attracted work from Great Places housing group, Save the Children and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. Whilst supporting current income targets of £51k per annum, there is scope for growth.

- 3.28 Alongside the commercial strategy the studio structure is being reviewed better reflect the skills and development requirements in the team to future proof their current award winning status and ability to bring in income. Development activity will focus on the creation of animated content, video/film production and editing and designing for the web. This will further enhance the skills of the team so they continue to be industry leaders.
- 3.29 The service is reviewing the contract with the Manchester Evening News on public and statutory notices to ensure the best possible approach is taken for a significant amount of spend. There is already an agreement in place at a reduced rate. This agreement is for the display of public notices in print and online. At £390k per year, this is significantly less than paying for advertising of notices on an individual basis. However, it is still the most significant spend from the Communications budget with a rise in the number of Temporary Traffic Orders that the Council is legally bound to publish increasing approximately 10% year on year.
- 3.30 The service is continually looking at how orders are displayed, to ensure best value against the agreement in place. Alongside this, Communications are continuing to look for alternative methods and formats to display statutory notices and understanding how the best opportunities are sought from the contractual relationship.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.