

Local Government Association Communications Peer Challenge – response to draft report

LGA Recommendations	SBC Response	By when	By who	Update
<b>Key Recommendation</b>				
<p><b>Clearly articulate, share and sell the vision for Slough</b></p> <p>Taking the following measures to do this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a perceptions survey to find out how residents and partners view the council, how they access information about the council and its priorities and how they want to</li> <li>• Develop a strategic communications strategy which tells the Slough story with honesty and passion – leading the council, community and partners in delivering the vision and priorities of the leadership</li> <li>• Develop a stronger and wider sense of ownership of the strategy – political, officer and throughout service areas, alongside partners and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Establish traction so that delivery does not slip – developing individual campaign plans that articulate the separate priority themes while telling the Slough story in a consistent way</li> <li>• Focus on quality, proactive content and two-way communications rather than broadcast channels</li> </ul>	<p>Our vision is now articulated through the new Five Year Plan developed with Commissioners.</p> <p>We are developing a corporate narrative to explain our vision and aims. The Five Year Plan has been launched with staff by the Leader/Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members with the Interim CE/Corporate Management Team</p> <p>Revised communications strategy – to deliver the vision with campaign plans that articulate the separate priority themes</p> <p>We are preparing a perceptions survey to be run in conjunction with the LGA</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p>	<p>Dean Tyler</p> <p>Dean Tyler John Seekings</p> <p>John Seekings</p> <p>Tracy Luck</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Recommendations – immediate				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the visibility of SLT in internal communications – for instance introducing principles of ‘listening leadership’; lunchtime Q&amp;A sessions with senior leaders, presence of SLT at team meetings and awaydays.</li> </ul>	<p>Reinstate programme of visits by SLT (expanded membership) to services to engage with staff</p> <p>Seek views of Employee Engagement Group of how SLT may improve visibility</p>	May 2017	<p>Anna Stacey</p> <p>Alan Sinclair</p>	<p>SLT discussed in January</p> <p>Need to develop a programme</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a more engaging tone on social media – be publicly helpful whilst focusing on proactive communications, not reactive responses. Ensure that all major announcements, policy changes, initiatives and issues are communicated on social media at the same time as the media are reporting the announcement, with links to background documents and context from the council to ensure that the council spends less time defending decisions on social media once the issue has been covered by traditional media.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed and proactive response in place.</p> <p>Social media strategy to be developed.</p>	June 2017	Kate Pratt	<p>This is on-going. We are now using social media outlets for all press releases at the same time as media receive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop with Cabinet and directorates annual campaigns plan for 17/18 linked to corporate plan. These could focus on monthly themes communicating outcomes and celebrating success on council priorities.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop annual plan for 2017/18 using new Five Year Plan, focus on monthly themes (outcomes) and celebrating success and council priorities</p>	April 2017	Kate Pratt	<p>New stories/ campaigns grid developing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the skills and capacity of the current communications team to understand if you are maximising the skills you do hold, and identify those that need more capacity</li> </ul>	Agreed	May 2017	John Seekings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an internal audit of currently available evaluation channels, such as media monitoring. From this develop a framework for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting internal and external activity and outcomes.</li> </ul>	We will seek advice on best practice on how to do this – initially via the LGA	May 2017	John Seekings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the results of the recent staff survey to baseline and further develop the internal communications strategy – maintain and grow momentum, the current outputs are valued. Ensure that all internal communications activity is aligned to external communications (for instance, making sure all key new initiatives, policies and issues are communicated to staff at the same time as the media).</li> </ul>	Agree an action plan to respond to the findings (with OD/HR, Employee Engagement Group) plus an external comms plan	April 2017	Alan Sinclair/ Anna Stacey	Detailed plan in place leading up to staff conference 18 May 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a perceptions survey to find out how residents access information – and prefer to (the LGA can help with this).</li> </ul>	Design work underway	May 2017	Tracy Luck	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to ‘walk the floor’ and be visible – staff really value it. Consider how to deepen this engagement, e.g. staff conference, Q&amp;A for senior leaders – in person and online, videos on intranet, internal blogs.</li> </ul>	<p>Members to consider how and when, e.g., staff conference, Q&amp;A (in person/online) Increase visibility through online channels (i.e. blogs, internal bulletins)</p>	Ongoing	All Commissioners	Some in place needs consistent plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on the importance of listening and encouraging two way conversations with staff, partners and residents through all communications activity to move away from a largely broadcast model of communications activity by introducing clear feedback mechanisms, including “you said, we did” initiatives internally and externally.</li> </ul>	<p>We have reviewed our approach to community engagement and are developing a corporate approach which will be linked to the developing customer strategy and communications strategy.</p>	June 2017	Tracy Luck	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an action plan led by a task and finish group consisting of senior councillors and officers that report back to the Employee Engagement Forum and other appropriate channels/forums.</li> </ul>	Commissioners to consider	To be discussed		
<b>Recommendations – short term (3 – 6 months)</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify who does what within the communications team – allocating named communications leads for each of the core themes of the 5 Year Plan. This account manager approach will allow</li> </ul>	<p>Lead officers to be confirmed for each of the new Five Year Plan outcomes (and the four enabling activities) to work with the Commissioners for each including developing communication plans. Temporary arrangements in</p>	May 2017	Kate Pratt	

<p>communications colleagues to maintain robust relationships with their lead member and director to develop a clear and strategic vision for communicating the council's priorities.</p>	<p>place pending recruitment to vacant post.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure senior communication attendance at key strategic officer and member meetings beyond attending for any specific items perceived as being communications issues. Strategic communications is usually most valuable when communications professionals can intervene or advise at an early stage on policy initiatives or issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Pending review of strategic communications</p>	<p>May 2017</p>	<p>Tracy Luck</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh and strengthen social media policy, including providing training and ongoing support for staff in directorates so they can use social media in a positive way. Adopt best practice and provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for all staff and introduce basic guidance on using social media in an engaging and publicly helpful way. Training should be delivered on a rolling programme and regularly refreshed.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed Work with the Customer Service Centre to ensure customer inquiries are dealt with through that channel (also part of social media plan)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Kate Pratt</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop social media champions – both officers and councillors. Identify rising stars with strong social media skills and adopt a ‘train the trainer’ approach through an internal social media network.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed. To be included in the social media plan.</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>Kate Pratt</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use data and insight to target and focus engagement with all audiences, and evaluate what works. Consider using trusted tools such as e-bulletins and monitor their use.</li> </ul>	<p>Review – council needs to improve and develop its approach to insight generally and this would form part of a wider piece of work, which is also subject to a current review across all Berkshire councils. We will also build into the Working with Communities Task and Finish Group and make use of the Acorn data.</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>Tracy Luck/ Dean Tyler</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a more consistent and vibrant approach to branding – some promising activity is already underway, but this needs to be distilled into a simple, striking, brand allied to council priorities. Branding targeted towards business should have a clear relationship to the council.</li> </ul>	<p>Review of council branding underway. Need to build in recent branding review for inward investment and how this may relate to council branding.</p>	<p>June 2017</p>	<p>Kate Pratt John Seekings Simon Hall</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrate success internally and externally using existing channels and identifying new ones. Slough has a great story to tell, consider identifying opportunities to get out there and tell including speaking at conferences, placing articles in trade, national and local press.</li> </ul>	<p>Requires a strategic approach allied to priorities not ad hoc good news stories (though they are valuable). We need to embed in the organisation to share good news (not just the Comms Team’s responsibility to identify) We do need to: Get articles in the local government</p>	<p>May 2017</p>	<p>John Seekings Kate Pratt Dean Tyler</p>	

<p>Invite journalists in for briefings. Use the Annual Report and the Citizen to showcase success externally and internally use methods such as blogs, videos etc.</p>	<p>and specific professional press Get officers and Members to speak at conferences.</p>			
<b>Recommendations – for councillors</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular training opportunities for Members on developing comprehensive communications and engagement skills</li> </ul>	<p>Work with OD/HR as part of the Member development programme to develop a proposal</p>	<p>April 2017</p>	<p>Tracy Luck</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how to brief out key cabinet decisions – brief the media under embargo and continue this on a regular basis so that stories appear in the media in a positive way rather than the council responding to or correcting media stories. Actively brief out ‘bad’ news as well as good to help mitigate negative impact. Prepare internal communications messages to match this so staff do not hear news in the press first. Align communications to partners and stakeholders so they hear major announcements and issues directly from the council (through face to face briefings or targeted e-newsletters), not from the media.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>April 2017</p>	<p>Kate Pratt</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the narrative and continue to actively brief on ongoing projects and decisions, e.g. fact sheets, Q&amp;A scripts – both public and private versions.</li> </ul>	Develop and maintain a set of tools to ensure that Members, CMT, managers always have an up to date set of messages, slides, data etc to explain where we are with our strategic direction, what we have achieved, the latest context and what happens next.	May 2017	Dean Tyler John Seekings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop clearer protocols and briefing processes for communications activity. Clarify exactly what the communications team are leading on, e.g. media relations, and what service areas are leading on, e.g. resident engagement. Use protocols to make it clear when councillors should be responding to communications queries, and when they shouldn't. When dealing with the media ensure clear processes for briefing councillors.</li> </ul>	Work with LGA to develop	May 2017	John Seekings Kate Pratt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use existing channels to share the energy of the organisation, e.g. 'you said, we did', 'New Year message'. Consider monthly messages from the Leader and Interim CEx, induction meetings for new starters and informal engagement sessions for existing employees. Identify opportunities for Cabinet members to speak at business forums, chamber of commerce events etc.</li> </ul>	Consider monthly messages from the Leader and Interim CE as well as at either year end or year start for both.	May 2017	John Seekings Kate Pratt Simon Hall	

Recommendations - Medium Term				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackle the IT deficit – it needs to be fit for purpose – digital should be at the heart of the strategic communications plan. Communications requirements should be a key part of this to ensure that equipment is fully enabled to maximise social media channels. Consider the needs of remote workers, and how they need to receive information and communicate with teams.</li> </ul>	<p>Will be addressed as part of the arvato service improvement plan and the digital programme, the design phase of which was agreed by Cabinet in November.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Roger Parkin</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Future proof communications by understanding and developing the communications skills needed in a 21<sup>st</sup> century council. This includes a knowledge and understanding of social marketing (including behaviour change) and staff adept at embracing social and digital media developments (possibly through apprenticeships) ‘Town hall’ meetings – consider providing structure and purpose to resident and stakeholder engagement. These could focus on a particular issue, e.g. sustainable transport, chaired by an independent expert. Consider web/twitter chats/online magazines as well as face to face public meetings.</li> </ul>	<p>Review structure of the Communications Team, in the light of all corporate resources savings proposals</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>Tracy Luck</p>	