



HEREFORDSHIRE
COUNCIL

Communications Strategy 2005 - 2006

Action for a better Herefordshire

- ...**Putting** people first
- ...**Protecting** our future
- ...**Providing** for our communities
- ...**Promoting** our county

Quality Life in a quality county

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Context and challenges

Effective communications are vital so that people in Herefordshire know what the Council does and are satisfied with how we do it. We have a positive story to tell. We deliver some high quality services and do this with relatively low government funding, in an area where the cost of service provision is high.

We have had a longstanding commitment to good communication since taking part in 2002 in the National Connecting with Communities project, sponsored by ODPM, LGA, IDeA and Audit Commission. Since then, we have moved forward on a number of fronts:

- We developed our first communication strategy with an action plan and targets for internal and external communications.
- We worked with senior officers and cabinet to clarify and simplify key messages for internal and external audiences.
- We now regularly publish Herefordshire Matters, our magazine aimed at local residents.
- We have increased the resources in the central PR team, particularly for internal communications. This has allowed us to produce regular internal communications such as Core News, to establish a system of team briefings and to set up Talking Point sessions with the Chief Executive and Leader.
- We set up a council-wide communications network to co-ordinate our work across the authority.
- We have established an intranet and dramatically improved our web site.

We measure our success by the fact that many of the communication actions recommended in the LGA's recently launched Reputation of Local Government project are already happening in Herefordshire:

- Effective media management
- Providing an a-z guide of council services
- Publishing a regular council magazine/newspaper
- Ensuring effective and consistent linkage of council brand to services
- Good internal communications.

We are proud of what we have achieved so far but we are not complacent. Herefordshire is an ambitious, high performing and innovative council facing a number of key communication challenges over the next year:

- In line with other councils, our satisfaction rating has dropped between the BVPIs in 2000/2001 and 2003/2004 from 59% who are fairly or very satisfied to 48%. Even though this dip reflected the national trend, Herefordshire has had a bigger drop in satisfaction (11%) compared with other unitary councils (6%). This is despite the fact that the Council performs above average in most respects and often does substantially better: 30% of its CPA Key BVPI scores are in the top quartile and 65% in the top two quartiles.
- We have to continue to meet the challenge of getting the Council's message out to a predominantly rural and sparsely populated area and communicating with residents in areas of higher social deprivation such as South Wye and central areas of Hereford and Leominster.
- We have to continue to meet the challenge of targeting communications at the changing demographic in the area – inward migration from other regions of England and Wales, an ageing population and a growing number of residents from Eastern Europe and Portugal working in manufacturing and agriculture in the county.
- We need to celebrate our achievements more forcefully so that the people of Herefordshire know what the Council and the Herefordshire Partnership are achieving on their behalf, particularly the benefits of lower crime rates, good education and the work of the Herefordshire Partnership. We also need to highlight the potential benefits from the proposed Local Area Agreement between the Council, the other members of the Herefordshire Partnership and the Government from April 2006 – bringing together in one investment programme of more than £100m, plans for the refurbishment of Hereford city centre, the creation of major new job opportunities in South Wye and the establishment of a learning village to raise skill levels significantly across the County.
- At the same time, we have to highlight the problems and challenges facing the Council such as the lack of affordable housing and the need to stretch financial resources even further, and explain to residents how we are tackling those challenges. In particular, we have to show how the Council is delivering added value through its strategic partners such as Shaw Homes (for older people), Herefordshire Housing (for social housing), Herefordshire Jarvis Services (for highways, property and grounds maintenance) and Owen Williams (for consultancy services).
- Finally, although the staff opinion survey has shown marked improvements in all aspects of internal communications, we recognise that they need to improve further to support improved performance and to encourage all our staff to be ambassadors for Herefordshire Council. Currently, just under two thirds of employees feel that communications within their service area work well. We are committed to improving this performance as we recognise that it underpins our external image and reputation.

The main purpose of this strategy is to lay out clearly the key messages the Council has to communicate, who it has to communicate them to, the tools it will use to accomplish this and how we will measure our success.

This strategy is relevant at all levels within the authority and should be owned by staff and Members alike. It is a working document and will be updated every year.

Key Messages

The Council's priorities are found in our contribution to the overarching Herefordshire Plan, our community plan – a ten-year vision for the County which underpins the Council's strategic aims and objectives in its own corporate plan. Both the Herefordshire Plan and Corporate Plan are currently being updated and reviewed and the ambitions and priorities are likely to change. These changes will be reflected in the communications strategy once agreed.

From the outset the Council has tried to ensure that the links between service areas and their contribution to the Herefordshire Plan ambitions were clearly set out in service business plans. The Council is encouraged by the fact that 84% of staff are aware of the Herefordshire Plan, according to the 2004 staff opinion survey, and that 60% of staff say they are kept informed about the Council's plans, priorities and performance.

However, to clarify how the Council is working toward the ten ambitions of the Herefordshire Plan these simple messages (which will run through all internal and external communications) have been developed under the overall strap line: **Action for a Better Herefordshire:**

- **Putting** people first
- **Providing** for our communities
- **Promoting** the county
- **Protecting** our future
- **Quality life in a quality county**

The chart overleaf shows how the ambitions of the Herefordshire Plan, the Corporate priorities and the organisational priorities relate to these key messages.

Key message	Herefordshire Plan Ambition	Corporate (external) priority	Organisational (internal) priority
<p>Putting people first</p>	<p>Encourage communities to shape the future in Herefordshire.</p>	<p>Develop the Council's community leadership role.</p> <p>Promote diversity and community harmony</p>	<p>Understand the needs and preferences of service users and council taxpayers</p> <p>Recruit, retain and motivate high quality employees.</p>
<p>Providing for our communities</p>	<p>Improve the health and wellbeing of Herefordshire people.</p> <p>Provide excellent education, learning and training opportunities in Herefordshire for all ages.</p> <p>Reduce crime and disorder and make Herefordshire safer.</p> <p>Reduce poverty and isolation in Herefordshire.</p>	<p>Maximise the health, safety, economic wellbeing, achievements and contribution of every child.</p> <p>Improve the achievement of pupils.</p> <p>Enable vulnerable adults to live independently and enable many more people to continue to live</p>	

	Meet Herefordshire's accommodation needs.	in their own homes.	
Promoting the County	Develop Herefordshire as an active vibrant and enjoyable place to be. Support business growth and create more and better paid work in Herefordshire.		
Protecting our future	Develop an integrated transport system for Herefordshire. Protect and improve Herefordshire's distinctive environment.	Improve transport and the safety of roads. Protect the environment, recycle more waste and reduce carbon emissions.	
Quality life in a quality county		Sustain vibrant and prosperous communities, including by providing more efficient, effective and customer focused services and clean streets.	Secure significant efficiency savings Ensure that its essential assets are in the right condition for the long term cost effective delivery of services. Embed

			corporate planning, performance management and project management systems.
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Communication Principles

Our communications are underpinned by five key principles:

- **Telling the truth:** our communications will always be honest, trustworthy and credible.
- **People, not statistics:** we will tell the Herefordshire story using plain language and real life examples, not facts and figures and management jargon.
- **Big picture:** our communications will always make the connections between the work of individuals and specific services at the council and the authority's overall reputation and long term aims.
- **Optimism and celebration:** we will focus on what works and what's achievable, finding the heroes within Herefordshire Council and promoting their work, and helping our citizens celebrate their achievements in the county.
- **Communication is for everyone:** we will always use inclusive language and find opportunities for residents and staff to be consulted and involved in our work.

These are consistent with our organisational values of:

innovation and creativity; fairness; partnership working; communications; our people.

Audiences

External

- Residents
- Service users
- The media
- Statutory partners
- Business partners
- Local businesses
- Voluntary sector
- Visitors
- National opinion formers e.g. MPs, think tanks, LGA, IDeA
- Regional opinion formers
- Regulators such as the Audit Commission, CSCI and Ofsted.

Internal

- Employees
- Strategic service delivery partners
- Unions
- Members – executive, scrutiny and backbenchers

These groups are not exclusive and we recognise that through the year we may be targeting new and different groups. Many of these groups will also overlap, e.g. service users and employees, so when we communicate with one audience we need to be aware that these communications may cross over to other audiences. The remainder of this strategy looks at how time and resources will be devoted to communicating with these groups.

Communications Objectives

External

- To create a better understanding between Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of our residents.
- To make sure people feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To provide open access to information about the council's spending and full range of services and activities.
- To raise our profile in the eyes of all our key audiences and to get credit for our achievements for the people of Herefordshire.
- To secure positive and accurate coverage of council decisions and activities in the local, national and specialist media.
- To show people we listen and take account of their views.
- To ensure people know how to influence decisions the Council makes.

Internal

- To create a better understanding about the links between the Herefordshire Plan, Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of staff and members.
- To make staff and members ambassadors for the Council.
- To make sure staff feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To inform and support staff to maintain and improve their commitment and motivation.
- To share information and learning across the Council.
- To listen and respond to the views of staff and members.
- To celebrate the successes of individuals, teams and the Council.

Communication Tools

We will use a variety of tools to deliver our Communications Strategy. These include:

Public Relations: magazine for our residents, campaigns, publications, exhibitions, events.

Media Relations: news releases, briefings, media campaigns.

Internal Communications: newsletters, intranet, team briefings, roadshows.

Corporate Identity: publications, signage, electronic communication.

E-communication: website, intranet, SMS messaging, digital TV.

Consultation: surveys, focus groups, meetings.

The key role of each function has been set out along with targets against which we will measure our success. These targets will be assessed with data gathered from a variety of sources including the residents' survey, the staff opinion survey, snapshot surveys and Herefordshire Matters.

Resources

The resources available to implement the Communications Strategy are:

The Corporate Communications Team
The Communications Network
Knowledge Management Team
All staff and Members in their contacts with the public.

Specific communications budgets include:

- Corporate Publications budget - £43,000
- Corporate Communications budget - £194,620
- Herefordshire Matters budget - £42,000

We have recently completed a communications audit to examine activity and spend across the council. As part of this we have identified at least 34 posts that have a key role in communicating with the public, staff or members on specific service issues. We know there is scope for a more efficient delivery of communications and PR support. Over the next year we will look more closely at this to determine how we can use our limited resources more effectively to support both the work of directorates and the corporate message. This approach has the support of the Management Board.

The Corporate Communications Team

It is the role of the Corporate Communications Team to make sure it:

- Communicates about Herefordshire enthusiastically and knowledgeably.
- Meets all agreed deadlines, particularly for media work.
- Maintains confidentiality at all times.
- Works to the highest professional standards.
- Complies with relevant legal requirements and the Code of Conduct on local government publicity
- Provides impartial, professional advice.

The Communications Network

The Communications Network is made up of representatives from the directorates.

The members of the Communications Network have to be the lifeblood of our internal and external communications by being communications champions within their directorates and the eyes and ears for good stories in the directorates. Over the next year we will review the role and membership of this group to make sure we have the right people for the task. This process will be led by Management Board. The Network will be re-launched with an annual programme of work and will be led and driven by the Head of Communications.

Over the next year we will also look at the training and development needs of the Corporate Communications Team team and the Communications Network to ensure they are supported to deliver this communications strategy.

Partnership Communications

The Council is an excellent partner and the Herefordshire Partnership brings together in common purpose the Council, the Chamber of Commerce for Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Link West Mercia, the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, the Learning and Skills Council for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the West Mercia Constabulary and a wide range of voluntary and other groups and organisations.

As well as this external partnership the Council also works with a range of strategic partners to deliver services and efficiency savings. This includes work with Herefordshire Jarvis Services and Owen Williams, membership of the West Mercia Supplies Partnership, Herefordshire Housing, Halo, SHAW residential care homes, the Sure Start Programme, the Courtyard Theatre, the Creative Industries Programme and Herefordshire in Bloom.

A key challenge for the Council is to ensure that Herefordshire residents fully understand which services are provided by which partners and that they know how to access them. It is also vital that residents understand the Council's role in both external and strategic partnerships and that the Council gets credit for its activities.

The promotion of many of these activities takes place through the full range of communication activities such as public relations, media work and internal communications and is outlined in more detail throughout this strategy.

Public Relations

Key roles

- To create a better understanding among residents about the links between Herefordshire Council and individual services.
- To make sure people feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To provide open access to information about the Council's spending and full range of services and activities.
- To raise our profile in the eyes of all our key audiences and to get credit for our achievements for the people of Herefordshire.

Action Plan 2005/6

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
Finish the roll out of the Ps and Qs key messages internally and externally: ensure they are present in every corporate document	Gain understanding and ownership of Council's key messages, internally and externally	Corporate Communications Team / ICT	Communications Network	Sept 05 – Dec 05
Produce guidelines on use of Ps and Qs	Provide guidelines on how and when to use Ps and Qs ensuring consistent look and feel	Graphic Designer	Corporate Communications Team	Sept – Dec 05

<p>Review Herefordshire Matters. This would include the following activities:</p> <p>Decide on funding mechanism for production, design and print to increase frequency to 6 times per year.</p> <p>Set editorial policy with a clear set of objectives related to the council's key messages and campaigns for the year.</p> <p>Improve design pending longer term changes.</p> <p>Use freelance journalist to produce feature material based on council key priorities.</p> <p>Commission some strong photography for key features in each issue – make stories picture-led.</p> <p>Market test new dummy publication with sample of employees and with Citizens' Panel.</p>	<p>Improve resident satisfaction with the council.</p> <p>Improve the cost-effectiveness and impact of the council's key communication channel.</p> <p>Greater promotion of council's key messages and activities.</p> <p>Greater impact of existing material.</p> <p>More 'human interest' stories making the link between council and residents.</p> <p>Greater impact and more human interest.</p> <p>Ensure changes are popular with residents.</p>	<p>Director of Corporate and Customer Services</p> <p>Public Relations Officer</p> <p>Graphic Designer</p> <p>Director of Corporate and Customer Services</p> <p>Director of Corporate and Customer Services</p> <p>Public Relations Officer</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team / Communications Network</p> <p>Corporate Communications Team / Communications Network</p> <p>Public Relations Officer</p> <p>Public Relations Officer</p> <p>Community Involvement Co-ordinator</p>	<p>September 05 – March 06</p>
		<p>19</p>		

Produce Corporate Events/Initiatives Calendar	Allows for more planned and pro active communications activity	Corporate Communications and Events Officer	ICT / Communications Network	Dec 05
Produce County guide	To promote Herefordshire	Corporate Communications and Events Officer	Graphic Designer / Communications Network	April 06
Produce A-Z of Council Services	Provide residents with information on services Council offers and useful contact numbers	Public Relations Officer / Graphic Designer	Communications Network	Feb 06 edition of Herefordshire Matters
Produce portable corporate exhibition with key messages and case studies	Can be used across the county at events/meetings to promote the council's work	Communications Officer / Graphic Designer	Communications Network	Jan 06
Develop communications campaign to promote the Local Area Agreement among partners and the public	To promote understanding of the benefits to residents and to ensure buy-in from partners.	Public Relations Officer	Corporate Communications Team	Oct 05
Develop a campaign to promote the council's work on street scene/liveability	To ensure residents know what the council is doing about this key concern and to improve resident satisfaction.	Public Relations Officer	Corporate Communications Team	Oct 05
Develop an 'awards timetable' and ensure the council makes at least 6 entries in major awards schemes.	To raise Herefordshire's profile among opinion formers.	Corporate Communications Team	Management Team / Communications Network	Sept 05 and ongoing

How we will measure our success

	Baseline 2002	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of residents satisfied with the Council	53%	53%	48%	53%
% of residents who feel well informed	28%	32%	49%	55% 2007/8
% of residents who don't feel the Council is too remote and impersonal	30%	30%	20%	32% 2007/8
% of residents who feel they know a fair amount/great deal about the Council	18%	22%	21%	26% 2007/8
% of residents who recall seeing a copy of Herefordshire Matters	13%	n/a	51%	n.a.
% of residents who say they find Herefordshire Matters useful	80%	n/a	71%	n.a.

Media Relations

Key Role

- To raise our profile in the eyes of all our key audiences and to get credit for our achievements for the people of Herefordshire.
- To secure positive and accurate coverage of council decisions and activities in the local, national and specialist media.

Action Plan 2005/6

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
Inductions for new journalists and PR unit visits to local media	Increase understanding of respective roles and needs	Public Relations Officer	Corporate Communications Team	Ongoing
Operate a 24/7 reactive media service	Open access to council information and decisions for journalists and the public	Public Relations Officer / Corporate Media Officer		Ongoing
Provide weekly media briefings for Leader, Cabinet, CEX and Mgt Board	Identify upcoming important / contentious issues	Corporate Media Officer / Public Relations Officer	Corporate Communications Team	Ongoing
Develop a rolling programme of proactive media campaigns on key issues.	Improve access for journalists and take a more pro active approach	Public Relations Officer	Corporate Communications Team / Management Board / Communications Network	Programme and key themes to be agreed Sept 05 and rolled out to March 06
Implement software for media management	Improve management of media enquiry system	ICT		Business case submitted but needs firming up and reconsidered. Decision by Information Policy Group by Jan 06

Improve media evaluation – provide analysis of coverage by Directorate to Management Board and communications network.	Allow areas to be identified that need more pro active positive coverage	Public Relations Officer / Admin and Project Support Assistant		Sept 05
Newspaper cuttings available on intranet	Keep staff better informed and provide additional research resource	Admin and Project Support Assistant / Public Relations Officer	ICT	Sept 05
Review media relations via journalist survey	To assess service levels and ideas for improvement	Public Relations Officer		Nov 05
Assess need for media training for key Members and officers	To ensure they know how to handle the media	Public Relations Officer / Members Support / Human Resources		Ongoing

How we will measure our success

	Baseline	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of news releases / statements used by the media	96.75%	90%*	91.7%	92%
% of positive and neutral coverage from national and local media	88%	90%	87%	90%
% of media enquiries answered within the first deadline as above	98%	90%*	98%	99.5%
% of media satisfied with PR's level/quality of service	N.A.	75%	100%	100%

* This was below baseline but felt it was a realistic target at the time

Internal Communications

Key Role

- To create a better understanding about the links between the Herefordshire Plan, Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of staff and members.
- To make staff and members ambassadors for the Council.
- To make sure staff feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To inform and support staff to maintain and improve their commitment and motivation.
- To share information and learning across the Council.
- To listen and respond to the views of staff and members.
- To celebrate the successes of individuals, teams and the Council.
- To make a direct contribution to Pay and Workforce Strategy and Corporate Plan

Action Plan 2005/6

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
Finish the roll out of the Ps and Qs key messages internally: ensure they are present in every corporate document including interview and induction packs, along with guidelines for their use	To gain understanding and ownership of the key messages	Graphic Designer / Corporate Communications and Events Officer	Corporate Communications Team / Human Resources / ICT	Sept 05 – Dec 05
Produce Corporate Events / Initiatives Calendar	Allow for more planned and proactive communications activity	Corporate Communications and Events Officer	ICT / Communications Network	Dec 05

<p>Review intranet:</p> <p>Clarify editorial responsibility</p> <p>Improve navigation</p> <p>Improve content</p> <p>Compulsory desk top features</p> <p>Messages of the day/daily new update, use as and when, with campaigns</p>	<p>Provide opportunity to share information and learning</p>	<p>Public Relations Officer / Knowledge Manager</p> <p>Knowledge Manager</p> <p>Management Board</p> <p>ICT</p> <p>Corporate Communications Team</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team / Communications Network</p>	<p>These activities will be integrated in a single project approximately six months in duration. To be prioritised as part of the review of projects called for by Corporate Management Board.</p>
<p>Review and relaunch Core News:</p> <p>Improve editorial content</p> <p>Improve design</p> <p>Increase to monthly publication</p> <p>Reduce/abolish Core News</p> <p>Specials</p>	<p>Improve impact and readership of this core communications product</p>	<p>Corporate Communications and Events Officer / Graphic Designer</p>	<p>Human Resources / Communications Network / Community Involvement Officer</p>	<p>Oct'05 – Feb '06 to review, relaunch in April 06</p>
<p>Review and update Team Briefing guidelines</p>	<p>Ensure consistency with new approach in Core News and build on highly valued method of communication</p>	<p>Corporate Communications and Events Officer</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team / Human Resources</p>	<p>Oct 05 to review, relaunch in Jan 06</p>

Set up a 'story bank'/series of 'did you know' factsheets	Collect examples of achievement/good practice among council staff. Good tool for Human Resources training, recruitment and inductions	Communications Officer	Admin and Project Support Assistant	Nov 05 and ongoing
Investigate feasibility of setting up employee panel to build on existing focus groups	Sounding board for effective internal communications	Communications Officer	Corporate Communications Team / Human Resources / Communications Network / Management Board	Nov – Dec 05 carry out feasibility study. If agreed roll out with full annual programme Mar 06
Update Managers' Guide to provide guidelines for communications responsibilities and back up workshops	Provide managers with practical back up for delivering communications objectives	Human Resources and Training Officer / Graphic Designer		Nov 2005 and ongoing
Look at outcomes for communications in Core Competencies for Managers	To identify current competence levels	Human Resources Manager – Employee and Organisational Development	Human Resources	Dec 05
Design a supporting communications module for e-learning	To ensure managers understand their role in communications	Human Resources and training officer		
Research feasibility of introducing staff suggestion and staff awards scheme Check with Chris Gooding / Jane	Celebrate innovation and success and build morale among staff	Human Resources and Communications Officer	Corporate Communications Team	Dec 05 to complete feasibility, introduce in 06 if agreed

Develop internal communications campaign to inform staff about implications of customer services strategy/new contact centre	Ensure all staff know what changes will mean for them and for local people	Customer Services	Corporate Communications Team	October 2006
CEX's/Leader's roadshow	Increase visibility of senior management and engage with staff on important issues	Management Board / Communications Officer / Human Resources Manager	Corporate Communications Team	Bi annual as required
Communications staff to job shadow across the organisation	To gain a clearer understanding of communication needs and increase accessibility of PR team	Corporate Communications Team	Admin and Project Support Assistant	Programme from Jan 06
Review communication with Members. Has been reviewed, was member led – needs to be looked at again	Ensure Members are clearly briefed.	Public Relations Officer	Members Support / Corporate Communications Team	Rolling programme of media training with members
Weekly bulletin for staff containing recent news stories and key decisions	Ensure staff feel informed of Council decisions and key initiatives	Communications Officer	Corporate Communications Team / Communications Network	Launch Jan '06
Establish full annual programme for Managers' Forum	To continue to share learning and best practice	At present Policy and Research Manager. Ownership needs to be reviewed by Management Board		Ongoing

How we will measure our success

	Baseline	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of staff who agree that Herefordshire Council keeps them informed about its plans and performance	60%	64%	47%	50%
% of staff who agree that communications within Herefordshire Council work well	39%	50%	34%	38%
% of staff who say that Core News is their preferred vehicle for general information about the Council.	14%	N/a	n/a	N/a
% of staff who say that Intranet is their preferred vehicle for general information about the Council	30%	n/a	n/a	N/a
% of staff who understand the Herefordshire Plan.	43%	n/a	n/a	N/a
% of staff who say morale within their work area is generally good			42%	50%
% of staff who speak highly of Council outside			48%	56%

Corporate Identity

Key Role

- To create a better understanding between Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of our residents.
- To create a better understanding about the links between the Herefordshire Plan, Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of staff and members.
- To raise our profile in the eyes of all our key audiences and to get credit for our achievements for the people of Herefordshire.
- To ensure we strike the right balance between the promotion of individual services, Herefordshire Council and our work within Herefordshire Partnership whilst maintaining and reinforcing the strong brand of Herefordshire Council.

Action Plan 2005/6

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
Finish the roll out of the Ps and Qs key messages internally	To gain understanding and ownership of the key messages and ensure they follow corporate branding guidelines	Corporate Communications Team / ICT	Communications Network	Sept 05 – Dec 05
Review and relaunch Core News: Improve editorial content Improve design Increase to monthly publication Reduce/abolish Core News Specials	Improve impact and readership of this core communications product while ensuring it follows corporate branding guidelines	Corporate Communications and Events Officer / Graphic Designer	Human Resources / Communications Network / Community Involvement Officer	Oct '05 – Feb '06 to review, relaunch in April 06

Review and update Team Briefing guidelines	Ensure consistency with new approach in Core News	Corporate Communications and Events Officer	Corporate Communications Team / Human Resources	Oct 05 to review, relaunch in Jan 06
Develop Managers' Guide to provide guidelines for communications responsibilities and back up workshops	Provide managers with practical back up for delivering communications objectives in line with corporate guidelines	Personnel Officer / Graphic Designer		Nov 05 and ongoing
Carry out site visits to Council offices to check adherence to corporate standards for publications, displays, signage etc	Ensure consistent promotion of the Herefordshire brand.	Graphic Designer		Bi-annual

How we will measure our success

	Baseline	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of residents who recognise the Council's logo	70%	75%	71%	72%
% of Council publications complying with corporate style guidelines	N.A.	70%	80%	85%
% of signage complying with corporate style guidelines	N.A.	80%	80%	85%

E-communication

Key Role

External

- To create a better understanding between Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of our residents.
- To make sure people feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To provide open access to information about the Council's spending and full range of services and activities.
- To raise our profile in the eyes of all our key audiences and to get credit for our achievements for the people of Herefordshire.

Internal

- To create a better understanding about the links between the Herefordshire Plan, Herefordshire Council and individual services in the eyes of staff and members.
- To make sure staff feel informed about the Council, its services, activities and performance.
- To share information and learning across the Council.

Action Plan 2005/6

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
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<p>Review intranet:</p> <p>Clarify editorial responsibility</p> <p>Improve navigation</p> <p>Improve content</p> <p>Compulsory desk top features</p> <p>Messages of the day/daily new update, use as and when, with campaigns</p>	<p>Provide opportunity to share information and learning</p>	<p>Public Relations Officer ICT</p> <p>Management Board ICT</p> <p>Corporate Communications Team</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team / Communications Network</p>	<p>These activities will be integrated in a single project approximately six months in duration. To be prioritised as part of the review of projects called for by Corporate Management Board.</p>
<p>Website version of County Guide</p>	<p>Promote Herefordshire to visitors and residents</p>	<p>Public Relation Officer / Knowledge Manager</p>		<p>(See review of intranet note above)</p>
<p>E-gateway and enhancement of online services</p>	<p>Improve electronic access to information and Council services</p>	<p>Head of ICT</p>		<p>(See review of intranet note above)</p>
<p>Improve A-Z page on website</p>	<p>Improve availability of relevant information to customer and make access easier</p>	<p>IT / Communications Network</p>		<p>(See review of intranet note above)</p>
<p>Develop corporate web guidance</p>	<p>To provide guidance over branding, style and approach</p>	<p>Knowledge Manager</p>		<p>(See review of intranet note above)</p>

How we will measure our success

	Baseline	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of residents who are aware that Herefordshire Council has a website	35%	40%	55%	
% of residents who have accessed the website	18%	n/a	28%	
% of residents aware of the website who agree that the website is useful	75%	n/a	87%	

Consultation

Key role

- To show people we listen and take account of their views.
- To ensure people know how to influence decisions the Council makes.

The action plan for consultation is outlined in the 'Community Involvement Strategy and Action Plan which is a link document to this strategy. Some key actions to note include:

- New programme of Community Fora.
- Consultation on partnership activities and priorities, principally the Herefordshire plan and the *Herefordshire Conversation*. Regular surveys through the *Herefordshire Voice* citizen's panel.
- Public consultation about Council Tax levels and budget options
- Well-established systems for establishing the needs of individual service users and carers.
- The *Customer Care Strategy* has led to the setting of corporate customer care standards. Major changes in the way services are provided have been made only after careful consultation (for example, the introduction of high street Info Shops followed a survey commissioned from Mori)
- Annual public satisfaction surveys.
- Having led the establishment of *The Herefordshire Equality Partnership*, the Council is identifying all relevant groups so that it can involve them fully.
- Consultation database/activity log.

Key Actions (for further details please refer to the Community Involvement Action Plan, which can be accessed on our website).

What	Why	Who	Resources	When
Undertake internal skills audit, leading to staff training programme and useful hints and tips available on Intranet	Assess skills and needs, and to improve staff skills to for high quality consultation with and involvement of communities	Community Involvement Team		Oct 05

Introduce electronic consultation mechanisms to council website	To make available an additional consultation tool and provide publicly accessible consultation database	Community Involvement Team, Web-Services		Oct 05
Review and make recommendations for use of existing involvement mechanisms, such as Community Fora	To make best use of existing mechanisms and increase the public's understanding of council work	Community Involvement Team, Community Forum Coordinator		Dec 05
Identify 'hard-to-reach' and Equality groups and enter into annual involvement programme, based on Equality Impact Assessments	Without fully understanding the needs of all groups in Herefordshire the Council will not be able to provide targeted services.	Community Involvement Coordinator, Diversity Group		Dec 05 and ongoing
Use Customer Satisfaction Surveys, Citizens Panels and other appropriate means to establish the needs and aspirations of communities	To have statistically reliable data available to provide the right services to local people	Research Team		Dec 05 and ongoing

How we will measure our success

	Baseline	Target 2003/4	Actual 2003/4	Target 2005/6
% of Herefordshire Voice respondents who feel that the Council does enough to give local people the opportunity to influence important decisions	9%	20%	n.a.	n.a.
% of Herefordshire Voice respondents who feel that they can influence decisions that affect their area	32%	35%	37%	n.a.
Number of staff attending consultation training sessions	0	N/a	N/a	50

Number of e-consultations undertaken in compliance with Community Involvement principles	0	N/a	N/a	15
Number of events that specifically target 'hard-to-reach' groups	0	N/a	N/a	5

Who's Responsible?

There are annual action plans for each communication tool to ensure the communications strategy is implemented. Progress against these will be reported on in the usual way, under the Performance Management Framework, including full performance report at the end of year.

The day to day management of the Communications Strategy sits with the Corporate Communications Team. Other key groups who hold responsibility are:

Chief Executive's Management Team

Members of the Chief Executive's Management Team will be responsible for driving the Communications Strategy. They will actively apply its principles to all aspects of their work.

They will communicate their decisions and the thinking behind them. They will be open, honest and timely in all communications.

They will ensure that they and their immediate staff meet the communications requirements outlined in the 'management competencies'.

They will be responsible for timely identification of important/contentious issues to the Public Relations Team.

Key Managers (i.e. members of Managers' Forum)

All key managers will take responsibility for ensuring successful implementation of the Communications Strategy within their area.

They will also:

- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the Communications Strategy and the key messages.
- Ensure that all members of staff feel that they can raise any issues of concern and freely express their views and opinions.
- Provide regular feedback to their senior manager, continuing the upward flow of information they've instigated with their staff.
- Ensure that they meet the communications requirements outlined in the 'management competencies'.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of who their Communications Network representative is and their role.

- Management Board have taken part in a 360 appraisal via consultants. Rest of Key Managers still going through 360 via e-enabled assessment (questionnaire)

Members of the Communications Network

Each Directorate/Department has a representative on the Communications Network. Each member has the following responsibilities:

- To assist with the implementation of all aspects of the Communications Strategy within their Directorate/Department.
- To actively participation in the Communications Network.
- To actively contribute to the preparation of a yearly schedule outlining key events and issues that require public relations support.
- To liaise with Directorate/Department personnel to provide the Corporate Communications Team with regular content for Herefordshire Matters.
- To liaise with Directorate/Department personnel to ensure that all communications adhere to the corporate style guidelines and communicate the key messages.

However, to ensure full and successful implementation of the Communications Strategy overall responsibility lies with every member of staff and elected representative.

A Plethora of Plans...Where does the Communications Strategy fit?

