



## Communications Strategy 2006-08

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# Communications Strategy 2006-08

## **Primary objectives**

To achieve a positive awareness, across all the diverse communities of the county, of the range of council services and how to access them, of the local democratic process and how to engage in it, and of the council's progress and performance relating to the vision and priorities for Herefordshire.

To foster a shared understanding and support among all employees, managers and elected members for a unified council, its vision, values, priorities and improvement strategies in order to create a strong foundation for transformation, culture change and performance improvement.

To increase pride and confidence in the county to citizens and work with our strategic partners to market the qualities of Herefordshire to key external audiences in support of tourism, business opportunities, regeneration, fair funding and internal investment.

To enhance the reputation of the council among key local and national stakeholders and opinion formers, including local, national and professional media.

## **Stakeholders**

Citizens - as stakeholders in the council and the county, as users of services and as taxpayers, including all of our diverse communities, however 'hard to reach' or specialist their information needs.

Elected members of the council - in their roles as representatives of the community, decision makers and custodians of the council's corporate reputation.

Council employees and our strategic partner employees - as a critical success factor in the delivery of the transformation vision and public services, and as ambassadors for the organisation and the county

Our partners - in other areas of public service, in business and voluntary organisations with whom the council will create and maintain effective working partnerships for the benefit of the community as a whole

Other local authorities and the organisations that represent them - to share information and best practice in achieving value-for-money effective public services

Central and regional government and their departments and inspection bodies - as funding and improvement agencies helping us to continually improve our services

## Framework

Herefordshire Council's communications operates within a framework, which aims to ensure that it is geared towards achieving engagement with stakeholders inside and outside the council, but also takes a leadership role in encouraging communication between council departments and across partner and stakeholder groups.

<p><b>INTERNAL</b></p> <p>The framework aims to encourage the sharing of information, understanding and views between management levels and front line services, and between departments across the council.</p>	<p>1. Across</p> <p>2. Upwards</p> <p>3. Downwards</p>	<p>Service units should be given the tools to communicate across the council, obtain the information they need from other units to deliver joined up working to customers and market themselves effectively to their service users and their colleagues within the council</p> <p>To employ feedback management systems to support a 'bottom up' approach to culture change, so that employees have confidence that their views, ideas and concerns are listened to and acted upon by management</p> <p>Management should have confidence that internal channels are guaranteed to communicate the vision and priorities clearly and consistently to all parts of the council</p>
<p><b>EXTERNAL</b></p> <p>In addition, the framework aims to encourage the two-way flow of information and understanding between the council and its diverse communities, and promote communication between stakeholder groups and communities.</p>	<p>4. Inwards</p> <p>5. Outwards</p> <p>6. Around</p>	<p>All of the communities in Herefordshire need to be given the means by which to engage effectively with the council and influence the course of service development and the plans for the county</p> <p>The council should communicate effectively, and market its services, to all stakeholders and all diverse communities, promoting the vision and priorities for the county, as well as information on the full range of council services and how to access them, and the democratic process and how to engage in it.</p> <p>The council needs to take a lead in promoting good communications around and between the county's stakeholder groups, diverse communities and our partnership organisations, and help build the tools and capacity for the county to market itself effectively.</p>

## **Responsibility for communications**

### Elected members

Elected members are a vital link in the communications between the council and the diverse communities it serves and fulfil a leadership role in communicating and influencing on behalf of the authority, whilst working closely with the agreed protocols for communication.

### Corporate management board

The chief executive and corporate management board will be responsible for demonstrating active leadership in communication - supporting communications principles and adhering to communications protocols as agreed. They will communicate visibly their strategic thinking, decisions and developments to heads of stakeholders using the appropriate established communications channels.

### Heads of service and key managers

Heads of service and key managers will work closely with the corporate communications function to ensure that the communications strategy, channels, principles and protocols are implemented in their areas of responsibility. They will ensure their teams are aware of the communications strategy and understand and support the communications principles and protocols. Using and adhering to established channels of communication, they will ensure that their teams receive important information accurately in good time and foster an environment in which employees feel able to express their views, raise concerns, questions and ideas openly and positively without fear of recrimination.

### Communications network

A recommendation of this communications strategy is that a representative communications network is re-established to influence the development of communications channels and services, co-ordinate communications activity in line with the communications strategy and ensure the adherence of protocols in their areas of operation.

### Everyone

Everyone within Herefordshire Council has a personal responsibility for communicating effectively and appropriately, sharing ideas and information, raising concerns constructively, using our established internal communication channels, and getting the message across positively to, and listening to, our stakeholders.

## **Communication programmes**

A large number of individual communications strategies, programmes and developments have been or are being put together to support the primary objectives of the communications strategy. The accompanying action plan details all the individual programmes and sets targets and identifies evaluation.

### Communicating with employees

## **Transformation**

A communications strategy supporting the overall transformation of Herefordshire Council is in development, its aims are:

- To increase employee confidence in how the council will lead the transformation and how its change programmes will benefit them and their customers.
- Achieve awareness, understanding and support, among all managers, employees and elected members of the council, of the benefits to be attained by the transformation programme and vision
- To win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services the transformation will deliver.
- To develop design for the 'strategic staircase' or 'road map' - an easily assimilated overview of how the key change programmes will transform the council.

## **Vision and Values**

Formulate with the transformation board a process, which will include use of representative focus groups and engage senior management team to:

- Promote and establish the transformational vision
- Gauge understanding of transformation and change programmes in order to identify issues to be addressed
- Contribute to the creation of a new values set that prepares the organisation to achieve its transformation vision.

## **Communications network**

To build an effective network of communications champions across the council who will help shape and drive communications strategies and programmes and act as ambassadors for good communications practice.

## **Communications calendar**

To produce an annual communications calendar which helps to support a strategic planning approach to campaigns and avoids 'clashes' in events planning

### **Internal communications channels: Weekly Updates**

To provide weekly reports to cabinet, the corporate management team, heads of service and communications champions on communications programmes and progress as well as press coverage.

### **Internal communications channels: News & Views**

To maintain a robust and measurable team briefing system that provides positive and effective dialogue between managers and their teams and will be recognised by employees as their most valued information channel

To implement new feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management

### **Internal communications channels: First Press**

To establish an employee news package that is guaranteed to reach everyone across the council - a 'fit for purpose', news leaflet that delivers key information to all employees, on time to budget, each month and replacing Core News (previously quarterly distribution).

Increase return on investment (more readers and engagement at no more cost)

### **Internal communications channels: First Press Online**

To complement the First Press newsletter with a detailed electronic version, again available monthly, for all colleagues with access to the intranet, which will be published on time to budget.

### **Internal communications channels: Talking Point**

To organise regular 'talking point' sessions with the leader and the chief executive to enable employees to raise questions, ideas and concerns

### **Internal communications channels: Leadership Forum**

To re-launch and re-brand the managers forum as the leadership forum with the aim to:

- Create a community of leaders

- Engage key managers in leading and driving the vision and priorities of the council
- Platform for visible leadership
- Provide a valuable networking opportunity for managers
- Celebrate success and achievement
- Build mutual understanding and respect across the service areas and the partnership

### **Internal communications channels: Notice boards**

To develop a strategic approach to managing notice boards as an effective communications resource

### **Internal communications channels: Intranet**

To develop relevant and useful content for the intranet – to help encourage the resource to be a well-used and well-regarded communication and information tool

To create a range of value-added applications that are structured around the needs of users and support improved performance across the council.

### **Internal communications channels: Inside Track**

To provide topical and pertinent news daily and electronically, designed to help employees and members understand key issues as they develop, relate them to corporate objectives and respond with their own views and ideas.

To counter ‘information overload’ by providing a focused and direct service to employees as they need it.

### **Internal communications channels: Horizontal communications**

To develop horizontal communications programmes and techniques that enable the sharing of information, best practice and jointed up working, develop mutual respect between service areas and the concept of the ‘internal customer’

### **Management competencies**

To ensure that communications skills and responsibilities are embedded in management competency framework

## **Employee communications toolkit**

To create a communications tool kit, which provides guidance and guidelines to help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels

### **Employee communications toolkit: House style**

To develop a consistent house style for the written word, address terminology issues for diversity and produce clear guidelines.

### **Employee communications toolkit: Plain language**

To produce guidelines for the use of plain language, supported with a collection of simple alternatives, which if used alongside the council's house style, will help the council to avoid complex language in our published documents and web site.

### **Employee communications toolkit: Defamation**

Produce policy and checklist that safeguards against libel and slander in all council communications and channels

### **Employee communications toolkit: Publications**

To produce specifications to enable officers to commission design and print cost effectively and professionally and ensure our publications are as accessible as possible to all our diverse communities

### **Employee communications toolkit: translation**

Incorporate existing guidelines on translation and interpretation to promotes improved accessibility to council services to more of our diverse communities and provides added confidence for service areas to provide translation and interpretation

### **Employee communications toolkit: Event management**

To produce a simple guide to managing external or internal events - covering every key stage and aspect, including venue, audience, layout, staging, message, invitations, guests, equipment, insurance, parking, branding, promotion and evaluation. To the support service areas in organising professional public events

### **Employee communications toolkit: Letter writing guide**

Produce a general guide for letter writing to help ensure a clear and consistent approach. It will enable the council to apply consistent style and principles to letter writing; how formulas can make letter writing easier and



more efficient; making letters easier to understand, in ways that support a positive reputation for the council.

### **Employee communications toolkit: Council reports**

To produce guidelines on how the toolkit, including the use of plain language, can be used in the writing of council reports

### **Employee communications toolkit: Marketing strategies**

To produce a marketing and communications strategy guide and template  
To help marketing and communications professionals ensure a consistent, professional and measurable approach to marketing strategies across the council

### **Employee communications toolkit: Email protocols**

Integrate current email protocols into the communications toolkit

### **Employee communications toolkit: All user emails**

Revise and promote policies on mass distribution emails within the council to maximise potential for conveying information quickly and reducing inappropriate use.

### **Employee communications toolkit: Presentations**

Produce guidelines for producing and delivering presentations – including a *power point* users' guide

### **Employee communications toolkit: Corporate identity**

To review the council's brand and corporate identity in order to ensure maximum recognition for the activities and achievements of the authority and bring the council together into a single, consistent, coherent and cohesive identity – underpinning one council, one vision, and one brand.

### **Design**

Review in-house design profitability and opportunities to improve return on investment to achieve a better return investment in the brand (higher visibility and recognition by stakeholders; reduced expenditure on print and design)  
More effective use of corporate identity to achieve better return on marketing investment

### **Communication and schools**

Create a proactive and positive communications framework with schools that adds value and confidence to the relationship with the council; improves two-way information flow; helps to promote further the performance of schools;

maintains a positive image of education in Herefordshire; and support schools in the marketing of their services; and dealing with media enquires and issues.

### **Pay and Workforce**

A new communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy In order to support the transformation vision – promoting organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and key work streams

### **Members' communications**

To develop dedicated member communication channels geared towards providing the information that members want and in the form and to the frequency they need it.

### **Members' publications**

Upgrade content and frequency of members' newsletter and service update, produce a guide to becoming a councillor, and a guide for new members.

### **Members' induction**

Design induction programme for new councillors and returning councillors.

### **Members' toolkit**

Design a comprehensive communications toolkit for elected members. It will include techniques to support elected members in communicating effectively with citizens and working positively with media

### Communicating with citizens and partners

### **Herefordshire Connects**

To achieve among all stakeholders, a high level of awareness, understanding and support for the vision and the benefits to be attained by the council's business transformation project - Herefordshire Connects. To build a wider awareness for the council's innovative approach to customer service

### **Customer service**

To promote council services and how to access them and increase external and internal awareness and understanding of the customer services strategy

To promote the customer complaints system externally and internally to help embed customer relationship management and complaints handling systems

## **Children and young people**

Formalise communications structures and channels across the directorate and key partnerships and develop a specific communications strategy for children and young people's services – include support for JAR improvement plan and the change for children programme - links progress to the transformation programme

## **Adults and Community Services**

A new communications strategy for adult and community services, which includes communications support for the adult social care improvement plan and development of services within the directorate - links progress to transformation programme

## **The Big Move**

To achieve awareness, understanding and support for the cost and service benefits to be attained by the move by most office-based staff to a single, modern site and the adoption of new flexible working, and win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services it will deliver.

## **Citizen Publications: Herefordshire Matters**

To increase frequency of the citizen publication from 4 to 6 times a year; improve return on investment in overall promotion of the council; build citizen readership, support and regard for the publication; and improve readability and accessibility of content and design.

## **Citizen Publications: Guide to the Council**

To produce a citizens' guide to council services which promotes the full range of council services and how to access them, and the local democratic process and how to engage in it.

## **Citizen Publications: Guide to Herefordshire**

Produce a high quality guide to promote Herefordshire as a destination for business, inward investment and tourism (with third party publishing house, providing it is cost neutral to the council)

## **Citizen Publications: Annual Report and Summary**

Produce high-quality corporate document that reviews and promotes the advance of the council's vision and priorities in an easily assimilated way, and publishes the statement of accounts in a clear design format. And to re-produce content and design in a simplified statement of accounts – a pocket summary - to promote the council's clear vision, priorities and progress.

### **Citizen Publications: Council Tax Leaflet**

Produce an easy to read summary of council tax and precept matters

### **Citizen Campaigns: Pride in Herefordshire**

To increase the percentage of citizens who feel proud of Herefordshire and are happy to live here

### **Citizen Campaigns: Finance**

To promote the council's approach to finance as encapsulated in the medium term financial management strategy

### **Citizen Campaigns: Direct Debit**

A campaign to persuade citizens and businesses in Herefordshire to pay their taxes by direct debit – the aim being to reduce significantly for citizens the time, hassle and inconvenience associated with paying in cash or by cheque, and reduce materially for the council the costs associated with processing payments by cash, cheque or standing order.

### **Citizen Campaign: Local democracy**

Develop a campaign to promote local democracy and how to engage in it more effectively, ensure citizens understand how they can influence decisions and how their views are sought and taken into account. Including promotion of scrutiny workings and recommendations, community forums and participation in local elections.

### **Citizen Campaigns: Livestock Market**

To promote an understanding of the need to relocate Hereford livestock market for the benefit of the majority of the community. Ensure that the recommendations for the location of the new livestock market are announced in a co-ordinated and controlled manner – making sure that those most likely to be affected by the news receive it first and directly from the council.

### **Crisis Communications**

To develop a robust crisis communications strategy to ensure the communications unit is equipped and prepared to work with key partners to ensure that all people are safeguarded at times of emergency.

### **Industrial action**

To establish communications plans to minimise the impact of any future dispute, ensuring the council can convey important and relevant information to citizens quickly in line with its commitment to protect the vulnerable

## Communicating with the media

### **Media: Communications Protocols**

To promote and embed working protocols that govern and guide the way the council communicates with the media, its citizens, employees and partners. The protocols will be pinned to a legal framework and will include governance of communications during the run up to elections, commercial transactions, referendums and promotion of scrutiny. The aim is also to improve responsiveness of the council to the media

### **Media: Performance**

To increase the productivity of the communications unit with increased numbers of press releases and statements produced by the communications unit; to ensure press releases are packaged professionally and have strong news value; to maintain a responsive press enquiry service for local, professional and national media and generally increase the volume of positive press coverage.

### **Media: Evaluation**

Investigate a performance and media management system for the press office

### **Media: Criticism**

Develop an objective, proactive and constructive approach to press and public criticism – ensuring the organisation is equipped to capture the value in criticism to use as a means of continual improvement

### **Media: Induction**

Prepare inductions to the council for new journalists and arrange visits to the communications unit.

### **Media: Customer Service**

Develop a set of customer care standards for the media

### **Media: Virtual Press Office**

Develop a 24-hour virtual press office service using the council's web site

### **Media: Copyright**

Explore copyright issues relating to use of newspaper cuttings internally and investigate cost reductions in this area

## Communicating with government

### **Government Relations: Framework and strategy**

To create a government relations framework and strategy, a stream of which will be to promote a 'fair deal for Herefordshire' – increasing levels of government funding in locally provided services.

## Equality, performance and development

### **Equality**

To promote diversity in the workplace, helping to ensure that awareness of diversity becomes embedded in all activities and functions; ensuring equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit and working closely with the diversity team in promoting the importance of equality impact assessments

### **Freedom of information**

To promote council responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act

### **Cost savings**

To ensure that new communications programmes and activity are implemented in line with the need to deliver recurrent and cumulative cash-releasing savings annually. Raise performance productivity as regards use of resources, including the achievement of best value for money

### **Customer responsiveness**

Develop new customer service standards for the communications unit in order to deliver an enhanced communications and marketing service to the directorates and service areas

### **Staff review and development**

To create a comprehensive skills development matrix for the key areas of performance in the communications unit in order to promote key skills in respect of the effective planning, performance management and delivery of services.

### **Winning awards**

To improve the reputation of Herefordshire Council through the winning of national prestigious awards, managing corporately the production of consistently high quality award submissions

## **Performance Indicators**

### Monthly

Number of press releases and statements  
Volume of press coverage achieved  
Volume of press enquiries responded to  
Percentage of enquires responded to before deadline  
Ratio of positive to negative press coverage

Use of the intranet daily news and press watch services

### *News & Views* implementation

Hit rates and visitor numbers for the web site (subject to web analysis software)

Customer satisfaction indices for design  
Profit and loss account for design work (compared with previous year)  
External and internal revenue split

Sickness absence rates in the communications unit  
Telephone answering response times  
Budget management

### Annually

Whether employees feel that communication is getting better, that they feel better informed, that morale and job satisfaction is improved (employee opinion survey)

Actual response levels to the employee opinion survey  
Readership and credibility of *First Press* (employee opinion survey)  
Effectiveness of *News & Views* (employee opinion survey)  
Use of the intranet by staff (hit rates and employee opinion survey)

Whether citizens feel informed and involved (subject to citizen panel and annual customer satisfaction survey)

Customer satisfaction indices for the press office (media survey)  
Use of the web site (web analysis software)

Return on investment in design

## **Communications channels and tools available**

It is generally not recognised just how many communications channels and tools are currently available for use in informing and involving a wide variety of audiences.

The following table outlines around 50 official and unofficial channels; how they work, their frequency, the audiences they address, the benefits to the council and how they will be developed further by the communications strategy.

Channel	Audience	Activity	Frequency	Benefit	Development
Media Press releases Press enquiries	All	Promotion of news through radio, television and print media nationally and locally  Managing issues	Potential 24 hours	Better informed audiences – danger that staff hear news of the council from the media rather than the council	Increased promotion of the council through larger volume of press releases, responsive service for media enquiries and more targeting of information
Ward members	Citizens Business Partners	Two way liaison and consultation	Daily	Better informed audience – intelligence on local issues – local leadership	Protocols for elected members to be agreed – improved communication with members
Executive members	Citizens Business Partners Government Media	Leadership role in promoting strategic issues	Daily	Demonstrating community leadership and accountability	Improved communication with members
Word of mouth (via staff)	Citizens Partners	Word of mouth is highly regarded information sources	Daily	A powerful communication channel if used positively  6,000 potential ambassadors for the council and the county	Need to improve internal communication and keep staff in the picture  Staff to feel informed and valued
Web site	Citizens Members Employees Partners Government	An key information and communication tool, available 24:7, for potentially a global audience	Daily	A promotional window for the council and the county	Opportunity for content to reflect the council and the county as dynamic and vibrant
Intranet	Employees	Important information tool on council policies and developments	Daily	Potentially a cost effective means of supporting managers and staff with relevant information	Content needs to be structured around the needs of users – such as online induction and managers' tool kit
Service staff directory	Employees	Directory of staff, structure and hierarchy	Daily	Helps staff locate each other	Needs updating after restructuring
Electronic news service	Employees	Daily news service on the intranet home page	Daily	Employees informed before they read about it in the media	Current 'latest news' box to be developed into a prominent and well used intranet application



AEMU	Employees Members Schools	Email to all email users list	Daily	Can get a message to 70 per cent of staff quickly (those with access to the intranet and a personal computer	Not as potent as it could be due to its over use of low level information  Sometimes used inappropriately  Requires governance
Email	Employees Citizens Members Partners Government	A personal communication on a specific issue	Daily	Provides a targeted means of conveying relevant information	Can be a powerful communication tool if used positively and sensitively  Email guidelines to be promoted
Letters	Citizens	Communicating with individual citizens on specific issues	Daily	Provides a personalised response to a specific query or concern	Can be a powerful communication tool if used positively and sensitively  Letter writing guidelines to be available
Service and staff directory	Employees Members	Helps individuals locate officers, their responsibilities and their position in structure	Daily	An essential directory for all employees with access to the intranet	Depends on service areas updating information (although this process is complex and not widely known)
Press watch	Employees Members	Press cuttings are updated regularly and available on request	Daily	Internalises in service areas responsibility for how council services are reported	Availability to be determined – while managing any copyright implications
Communication update	Cabinet Directors Heads of Service	Update on press releases and coverage and upcoming communication projects  A reporting tool for progress on communication	Weekly	Regular summary of communication work and issues – early warning system for forthcoming media coverage	Is cascaded to managers beyond its formal distribution – a question as to whether it needs to be developed for wider circulation
Leadership letters	Key managers	Occasional letter outlining important developments	Various	Direct and informative communication	Can cut across other channels if not integrated into communication plans
Consultation	Citizens Business Partners	Canvassing of opinion face to face, by questionnaire or electronic consultation	Various	Data helps drive service improvement	Better co-ordination of consultation and communication activity

News & Views team briefing	Employees	Face to face discussion of developments – plus feedback management system	Monthly	Internal communication channel most favoured by staff – gives management an overview of staff concerns	Positive reaction by staff but not all managers are implementing News & Views – monitored to improve cascade effectiveness
News & Views Feedback	Employees	Electronic and print out distribution to teams	Monthly	Provides responses to the questions and concerns raised by staff in the previous month	The challenge is to turn around approved responses in good time after the initial questions
First Press (Highlights)	Employees	Hard copy news leaflet delivered to employees with payslips. Only regular communication guaranteed to get to all employees	Monthly	Promotes awareness, understanding and support for council priorities.	Expand to two sides of single A4 sheet so that it can be collated by machine
First Press (Online)	Employees	Electronic and extended version of the news leaflet	Monthly	Promotes use of the intranet with links to further documents as required	Being developed as a means of channelling audience to important information on the intranet
Directorate and service area newsletters	Specific service teams	A variety of print and electronic newsletters are produced	Various	Promotes local understanding of service area priorities	Support local newsletters with corporate templates to help consistent design and house style
Staff review & development (SRD)	Employees	Annual or six monthly review and planning of performance & development	Six monthly	Links individual targets and performance to the service and corporate plan	Communications needs to be recognised as a staff skill and responsibility – linked to SRD process
Service leaflets & publications	Citizens Members Employees Partners	Publishing information on council services and how to access them	Various	Promotes take up of services	Needs a consistent and professional look to reflect a positive image of the council – specifications on corporate identity to be promoted
Reception areas	Visiting citizens, businesses, members, employees and other organisations	Front line interaction with visitors	Various	Promote better understanding of council services and how to access them	Needs a consistent and professional look to reflect a positive image of the council – specifications on corporate identity to

					be promoted
Notice boards	Employees	Distribution of information – promoting events to staff	Various	Reminds staff of key programmes  A supporting rather than key communication channel	Needs audit and management of the council's notice boards to ensure they are getting messages to staff effectively
Committee meetings	Citizens Members Partners	The standing committees have a quasi-judicial role in terms of planning and regulation	Various	Promote better understanding of democratic process and how to engage in it	Communications to become more closely involved in key papers at an earlier stage to help promote the process
Cabinet  Full Council	Citizens Members	Decision making	Various times		Communications to become more closely involved in key papers at an earlier stage to help promote the process
Scrutiny  Strategic monitoring	Citizens Members Partners Employees	Probe and hold to account council decisions and review performance	Various times	Demonstrates accountability and transparency in council decision making – although potentially confusing for some citizens	Specific communications plans and protocols to be developed to support the promotion of scrutiny and its work
Leadership Forum	Key managers	Create new community of leaders  Share best practice in leadership  Harness ideas and support of key managers	Quarterly	Involves managers who have a strong leadership role in driving transformation  Delegates benefit the council by their contribution as well as themselves in leadership development	Steering group established to develop the forum  Feedback from delegates collected in order to influence further forums
Talking Point	Employees	Chief executive engages employees on key issues	Quarterly	Leadership and engagement given more emphasis  Credible channel for disseminating information	Attendance needs to be boosted in some areas of the authority

Herefordshire Matters	Citizens Members Employees	Update citizens on council services and decisions	Quarterly	Promote better understanding of council services and how to access them	Frequency too low to build a viable relationship with citizens – needs 6 editions per year but at same cost
Corporate plan and operating plan	Citizens Employees Members	Promotes strategic direction and progress on priorities	Annually	Leads service planning and development	Individual areas of the plan require specific promotion to build employee understanding
Members newsletter	Members	Promotes to all members developments of interest	Quarterly	Informs members about council programmes	Frequency too low to keep members fully informed
Service update	Members	Promotes to all members developments of interest	Quarterly	Informs members about council programmes	Frequency too low to keep members fully informed  Possible combination with member newsletter
Community forums	Citizens	Engages citizens on issues of local relevance	Quarterly	Promote better understanding of democratic process and how to engage in it	Will develop with partnership working with police  Needs stronger promotion
Staff Induction	New employees	Gives new employees an overview of council services, projects and policies	Various	Potentially introduces new starts to council vision, values and priorities	Transformation vision and messages to be promoted  Values to be clarified
Member induction	Newly elected members	Sets the scene for the profile of Herefordshire, key issues, ethics, policy framework, council services and structures.	Following local elections	Provides an early understanding of how local government operates in Herefordshire.	New induction programme being agreed for May 2007
Employee Opinion Survey	Employees	Surveys all employees on work issues	Annually	Information on staff morale and job satisfaction	Feeds into service planning
Member working groups	Members		Various	Engages members in the improvement of the authority	
Council and community events	Citizens	A wide range of events that address specific or wider communities	Various	Shows the council taking a lead in promoting a local sense of community	The council's role in organising or funding events needs to achieve more recognition
Council tax	Citizens	Communicates	Annually	Potentially	The challenge is to

leaflet	Members Employees	the council tax rate and how it was spent		builds citizen understanding of how the council is funded and where the money is spent	make the information relevant and accessible for the widest possible audience
Report and Accounts (Full Report)	Accountants and auditors  Partner organisations  Elected members  Local and regional government community	To produce a high-quality, corporate document that reviews and promotes the advance of the council's vision and priorities and publishes the statement of accounts in a clear design format.	Annually	Gives the in-depth picture on the financial health of the council – of great interest to strategic partners	
Report and Accounts (Summary)	Citizens	To produce a simple summary of accounts and a review of progress over the year	Annually	Demonstrates accountability and promotes understanding of where funding comes from and where it goes	A summary document is available on request and on the web site – the main findings need to be promoted more widely
Whistle blowing charter	Employees	The principle is that service users and the public interest come first.  Employees can raise concerns about service provision, the conduct of officers or councillors	At any time	The charter provides a means of exposing internally any form of wrongdoing, such as inappropriate treatment of children or adults, or discrimination, fraud and corruption.	A simple charter promoted through a leaflet and the intranet (based on the established policy) will help encourage the internal raising of any employee concerns.
Freedom of Information	Media Citizens Stakeholders	The provision of information to citizens, the media or any other interested party in accordance with the FOI Act.	At any time	The efficient management of FOI requests helps present the council as open and accountable	The communication unit to work closely with FOI officers to ensure co-ordination of press statements with press FOI requests
Rumour	Media Employees	The unofficial and inevitable activity of passing on comment that	At any time	There are no benefits to the council in this activity	Increase frequency and penetration of official communication (internally and

		may not be accurate			externally) to help avoid development of rumour and speculation
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Full communications programmes details - including objectives, targets and evaluation - are available in the action plan appendix.

There are full communications plans available for most of the projects outlined in the action plan and are available on request,