ACTION PLAN – Communications Strategy 2006-08

Appendix 2

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Transformation: Project To increase employee confidence in how the council will lead the transformation and how its change programmes will benefit them and their customers To 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.	Encourage the organisation in delivering significant benefits for employees, citizens and partners To help the authority meet its future challenges - including increased citizen expectations, internal skills and capacity shortages and financial pressures. Further areas of work proposed for communications include:	Produce an action plan that promotes to employees the formation of the transformation structure, role and its work in developing the vision, values and the 'strategic staircase' or roadmap. Develop and promote to individuals in the change boards a shared understanding of communication principles and build formal communications structures between the various boards. Update Herefordshire Connects communications strategy to take account of its new positioning and links to other change programmes Update the Big Move communications strategy, linking the accommodation strategy closely to the transformation programme Develop communications strategy for children and young people's services, which includes support for the improvement plan Develop communications strategy for adult and community services, which includes support for the improvement plan Develop customer services communications strategy, which promotes advances in customer service as part of the transformation programme Develop communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy, including support in promoting organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and other key work streams Agree communications support for member reference group (which will co-ordinate the transformation programme across cabinet portfolios and inform and involve members in the transformation programme.	Sep 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Transformation: Vision and Values Formulate with 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.	A vision for transformation and how it will benefit citizens, partners and employees has yet to be crystallised The council does not yet have a clear, understood and shared value set that supports its ambitions and the change imperative	**Vision** To crystallise transformation vision as determined by transformation board Produce internal and external communications plan to promote vision Use plain language to ensure the vision and its elements are meaningful, memorable and marketable for all stakeholders Agree description with strategic partners Launch new vision and values Measure understanding of vision in staff survey and citizen survey Re-evaluate and amend communications plan **Values** Research values of high performing, customer service driven organisations Produce internal and external communications plan to promote values Work with HR to research different values currently at Herefordshire Employee change teams (include senior and key managers) to identify and discuss possible values Consultation with strategic partners and citizens Feed in results to re-branding programme Launch new vision and values Measure understanding of vision in staff survey and citizen survey Re-evaluate and amend communications plan	Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Dec 2006 Jan 2007 Oct 2007 Nov 2007 Oct 2006 Oct 2006 Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Dec 2006 Dec 2006 Jan 2007 Oct 2007 Nov 2007
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.	To encourage everyone to promote a positive understanding of the organisation to citizens, partners and employees Ensure the network influences development of communications programmes	Recruit communications network Develop mechanisms for keeping the network informed and closely involved in communications planning and activity Understand how the corporate function can best support and empower communications activity across the council Establish regular meetings to agree key programmes	Sep 2006 Sep 2006 Nov 2006 Nov 2006

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Communications calendar To produce an annual communications calendar	Helps support a strategic planning approach to campaigns and avoids 'clashes' in events planning	To produce a 'skeleton' calendar based on key events and consult with service areas to complete. Add national events were applicable.	Sep 2006
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.	To inform and engage senior members and management in communications plans and activity To identify and share information on upcoming important or contentious issues To act as a regular and transparent reporting mechanism – logging productivity and progress To enable senior members and managers to influence readily and quickly the work of the communications unit	Create a format for weekly communications reports and agree a shared production cycle with the communications team Provide links for further information as required Ensure the update is consistently distributed each week and that potentially controversial issues are reported sensitively Establish weekly briefings and discussions on forthcoming media issues with the leader. Seek feedback on format, frequency, content and distribution of the communications update Implement improvements Link with First Press Online to share information relevant to all employees (such as press coverage)	Mar 2006 Jun 2006 Ongoing Jun 2006 Nov 2006 Dec 2006 Jan 2007

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 To be recognised by staff as most valued information channel	The team brief is the most effective means of internal communication. A robust face to face briefing system will promote effectively the council's priorities and themes internally and is more likely to engage staff in the vision and priorities of the organisation	The News & Views system was launched and is in the process of being embedded. Consult HR, SMT and CMB – monitor and report implementation monthly Produce a six monthly review of implementation with recommendations Measure employee reaction in employee opinion survey Devise training module if required Steadily grow number of team briefs implemented: 50 per month 100 per month 150 per month	Apr 2006 Monthly Sep 2006 Oct 2006 Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Apr 2007 Sep 2007
To implement new feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management	The council will be equipped to listen to and act on the views and ideas of staff for the benefit of the authority Encourage a culture where staff can raise questions and concerns as well as ideas	Ensure a timely response to all questions raised by employees each month Review design and structure of feedback to make more accessible Implement improvements	Monthly Nov 2006 Feb 2007

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Internal communications channels: First Press To establish an employee news package that is guaranteed to reach everyone across the council To produce 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)	Improve direct employee communications in order to increase awareness, understanding and support for the council's vision, values, priorities and objectives. To show the council is investing in communicating with employees, boosting the percentage of colleagues feeling informed about the council; and, in being informed first and directly, colleagues will feel more valued, which will influence job satisfaction levels. To promote pride, confidence, a sense of belonging and team spirit across the council, encouraging an increased mutual understanding and respect for the work of colleagues in other service areas, more joined-up working and sharing of best practice.	Increase frequency to support the required pace of change Improve editorial content to make it relevant and accessible for every employee Enhance design, and use full colour, to help employees feel the council is investing in keeping them informed and engaged Distribute with each pay slip each month – with more detailed online version. Because every employee demands their payslip, they will also receive their copy of First Press. Payroll to accommodate a 1/3rd A4 leaflet in the payslip envelopes - provided the news leaflets are delivered to payroll by the 15th of the month, ready for distribution to 5,800 employees by 25th of the month. The design of *First Press* will aim to encourage employees to read it straight away, rather than put it to one side for later. Achieve high scores for readability, relevance and credibility for the news leaflet and electronic newsletter in the eyes of staff; aiming for a 50 per cent score in the first benchmarking Readability ratings rising to 70 per cent Readability ratings rising to 90 per cent	Jun 2006 Monthly Nov 2006 Nov 2007 Nov 2008

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.	To address 'information overload' for employees by fulfilling an 'air traffic control' role, alerting colleagues to what is important and directing them to further information on the intranet as they need it, which also serves to encourage greater usage of the intranet. To support the overall objective of adding value to communications by achieving a substantially enhanced return on investment compared with the previous employee publication.	*First Press Online* (the electronic version) will cover the same subjects as the news leaflet but in more detail and will be accessible to colleagues with a personal computer at work (about 70 per cent of employees). Readers will be encouraged, via hyperlinks, to access supporting documents elsewhere on the intranet. *First Press Online* will also use crisp and simple design, with good use of photography and full colour. It will reflect the design values of the hard copy news leaflet version. Photography will be of a professional quality and creative. The online version will seek to engage and deliver something for everyone. Balance will be managed across directorates and service area. *First Press Online* lends itself to online staff surveys on specific issues – such as car parking or flexible working. Popular among majority of contributors (level of demand for inclusion) Feedback forms cut out from *First Press* news leaflet returned (qualitative) Intranet surveys on general communication issues (quantitative) Employee opinion survey will benchmark readership, relevance and credibility across all the diverse audiences within the council.	Jun 2006 Monthly Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Ad hoc Nov 2006
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	Boosts visibility of leadership and engaged colleagues at all levels in the council's important programmes and culture change initiatives.	Talking point sessions will be organised in order to attract and engage as many employees as possible Performance measures to be established: how may people attend, number of contributions, feedback after event and employee opinion survey	Quarterly Nov 2006

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Internal communications channels: Leadership Forum To re-launch and re-brand the managers forum Create a community of leaders Engage key managers in leading and driving the vision and priorities of the council Platform for visible leadership Networking opportunity for managers Celebrate success and achievement Build mutual understanding and respect across the service areas and the partnership	To engage key managers and harness their ideas and contributions for the benefit of the organisation Provides a means of forward planning important and 'cross-cutting' initiatives, with key managers Helps key managers to influence initiatives and prepare their service areas for change	To support a new culture for leadership, and an active environment at the forum to drive change, communication, contribution and performance, the name of the forum should be changed from managers' forum. It is proposed that it should be called: The Leadership Forum. The forum will be organised quarterly: Feedback on each forum will be gathered and used to influence the next forum Guest speakers will be engaged to share experiences and best practice in leadership	Jul 2007 Oct 2007 Jan 2008 Apr 2008 Jul 2008 Ongoing Ongoing
Internal communications channels: Notice boards To develop a strategic approach to managing notice boards as an effective communications resource	Make most effective use of the boards in terms of placement, management and updating of content and best use of assets Most staff notice boards are cluttered and out of date	Audit current notice boards across the council Establish who has management responsibility for each board Ascertain whether they are situated where there is maximum footfall Develop policies that govern content and updating of notice boards Rationalise and re-position notice boards for maximum effect Launch new branded council notice boards	Jan 2007 Jan 2007 Jan 2007 Feb 2007 Apr 2007 Jun 2007

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 Create a range of value-added applications that are structured around the needs of users and support improved performance across the council.	To ensure that employees are able to find the relevant, up to date information, policies and guidelines they need to manage and improve their performance Will ensure the intranet adds value in terms of providing a trusted, easy-to-use central resource for sharing information and learning Will help all new employees to become aware of the council's vision and values, how it operates, key contacts, code of conduct, policies, benefits and training opportunities	Online Induction Develop a structure of information that prepares new employees online for, and introduces existing employees to, the organisation they work for. Manager's toolkit Develop a structure of information that supports managers with the full suite of policy and guideline documents – including performance, budget and people management – links to management competency framework. The online induction and managers' toolkit will structure information around the needs of users, so it will be easily accessible and contained within a simple menu structure The communication unit will work closely with ICT and HR through the planning and implementation stages	Draft: Dec 2006 Implement: Mar 2007 Draft: Feb 2007 Implement: Jun 2007

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.	The service is fast and immediate, ensuring that all employees and members with a personal computer have access to news first and as it happens. Available directly via the home page, it will significantly increase the chance that news and announcements affecting employees will be read The launch of a news service that is updated several times a day ensures that the intranet reflects a council that is vibrant, dynamic, modern, open and communicative. Creates a 'killer application', which will increase substantially the level of intranet usage by staff and members.	A daily electronic news service will add value with: Important announcements from the corporate management board (supported if necessary by a all staff email with a link into the item) A 'news tower' based on press releases (with images if appropriate) will contribute to the flow of news for employees Employees with access to the intranet will always receive information before they read about them in the press. Key additions to the site - reports, research and documents - will be given their own news item, with hyperlinks to the document, or for example, a relevant announcement in a government website. There will be summaries of news articles from the external media, with a link to an electronic press cuttings service. Important events inside and outside the council will be promoted. The all-staff email facility will then be reserved for urgent announcements directly from the corporate management board. Review of effectiveness through benchmarking and employee opinion survey	Nov 2006 Ongoing Evaluate using web site analysis software – tracking usage Nov 2007

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'	Build on improved 'downwards' and 'upwards' communications within the authority by developing effective 'across' communications and information sharing to support the 'one council' vision, promote joint working and help dismantle silo cultures.	Develop guidelines to help each service area to share information about its customers, its services and its scope Consult communications network on expectations Create intranet guidelines for service areas to market themselves to the rest of the council, including intranet reporting and updates Provide guidelines for service areas to produce presentations on their work Create online forms for service areas to identify what information they need from other service areas to serve their own customers better Agree templates for internal service standards - consult with service areas Develop system for monitoring requests for information and responses (principle, if one service area needs information from another service area to provide a better service then they should have it) Produce plans and guidelines for presentations Integrate horizontal communications opportunities in the News & Views team brief system, setting targets for 'guests' from other service areas Feature key service areas in the employee newsletter First Press and promote service area presentations in the electronic news service Benchmark quality of horizontal communication in staff survey and set performance improvement targets	Jun 2007 Jun 2007 Aug 2007 Aug 2007 Aug 2007 Sep 2007 Sep 2007 Sep 2007 Nov 2007 Nov 2007 Nov 2007
Management competencies To ensure that communications skills and responsibilities are embedded in management competency framework	Promotes leadership through communication, clear vision and priorities, joint working, information sharing, diversity, active feedback, ideas, and helps promote compliance and performance management.	Discuss with HR how the new communications, framework, principles and channels can be supported in the management competency set (management competency questionnaire already contains section on interactive communication) Links to plans for an online managers' toolkit and the employee communications toolkit.	Feb 2007 Mar 2007

EMPLOYEES			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
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	Empower staff to communicate success efficiently	The communications tool kit to include: house style, plain language dictionary, better letters guide, public events management, power point and presentation guide, email protocols and guide, publications guide, access guidelines to channels like team brief, in-house newspaper, citizens' publication, all staff email, intranet, web site The toolkit will be compiled in two stages: Guidelines and tools for the written word Guidelines and tools for design and corporate identity	Dec 2006 Mar 2007
Employee communications toolkit: House style To develop a consistent house style for the written word To address terminology issues for diversity and produce clear guidelines To provide a 'quick grammar guide' to try to avoid some common errors.	Herefordshire Council is a major 'publishing house' in its own right, producing hundreds of leaflets, flyers and reports. A house style will help ensure that written communication is clear and professional. It will save the council time and money: streamlining production for printed or electronic material, cutting down on expensive author's corrections.	Consult the communications network and diversity team on a comprehensive house style in drafting the house style Incorporate modules on correct diversity terminology Incorporate a simple 'grammar guide' to correct common errors Ensure linkages across other elements in the communications tool kit Publish tool kit	Jun 2006 Dec 2006

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.	By using simple and clear language, we address the information needs of local people and enable them to engage with us more easily. Plain language speeds up communication and avoids confusion - helping us become more efficient as a council.	Draft and consult on the plain language guide and dictionary Produce training module to build awareness and understanding of how the increased use of plain language support the council's objectives in becoming more effective and more efficient in its use of resources Publish tool kit	Jul 2006 Dec 2006 Dec 2006
Employee communications toolkit: Defamation Produce policy and checklist that safeguards against libel and slander in all council communications and channels	Avoid potential damage to the council's reputation and finances	Provide easy-to-use guidance for all officers involved in writing or commissioning publications or design work (including the web site and intranet) on issues of libel, slander, copyright, reporting restrictions (children and young people), data protection and use of photography.	Dec 2006
Employee communications toolkit: Publications To produce specifications to enable officers to commission design and print cost effectively and professionally To ensure our publications are as accessible as possible to all our diverse communities	The council is a publishing house in its own right and in order to produce consistently professional publications it requires a house style and design guidelines	Draft and consult on the publications guidelines The guide will cover every aspect of publication production, from setting objectives, briefing the designer, accessibility, equality and diversity issues, plain language, use of photography and graphics, advertising and promotion, as well as distribution and evaluation Publish tool kit	Oct 2006 Dec 2006

Employee communications toolkit: translation Incorporate existing guidelines on translation and interpretation	Promotes improved accessibility to council services to more of our diverse communities Provides added confidence for service areas to provide translation and interpretation	Consult with diversity team on integration of translation and interpretation guidelines for community language and human-aided communication Integrate with the communications tool kit and publish	Oct 2006 Dec 2006
Employee communications toolkit: Event management To produce a simple guide to managing external or internal events	Organising events can often fall to people who have had little previous experience. A checklist will take the mystery out of organising events. Empower officers to promote services professionally	Draft in consultation with diversity team and communications network A comprehensive checklist will cover every key stage and aspect, including venue, audience, layout, staging, message, invitations, guests, equipment, insurance, parking, branding, promotion and evaluation. Publish tool kit	Oct 2006 Dec 2006
Employee communications toolkit: Letter writing guide Produce a general guide for letter writing to help ensure a clear and consistent approach	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.	Develop principles for letter writing and composition, establish formulas and structures for conveying information clearly, set guidelines for consistent use of type and plain language. Consult diversity, the communications network and customer services Publish as part of the communications toolkit	Sep 2006 Oct 2006 Dec 2006

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	Make council reports more accessible and promote more citizen engagement in the local democratic process	Work with democratic services to review templates and guidelines for council reports in line with new written word and design guidelines Publish as part of the communications tool kit	Nov 2006 Dec 2006
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	Draft comprehensive guide to producing marketing or communications strategies in-house – consult with communications network Provide training module to accompany the guide and provide presentation as part of the council's certificate of management programme Publish as part of communications tool kit	Oct 2006 Dec 2006 Dec 2006
Employee communications toolkit: Email protocols Integrate current email protocols into the communications toolkit	Puts all communications guidelines in one place for easy accessibility	Discuss with ICT on how email protocols can be further promoted within the council as part of the new communications toolkit Publish as part of the communications toolkit	Oct 2006 Dec 2006
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.	An all-staff email is potentially an effective communications channel. But if the email is not read, then its effectiveness is negated.	Policies to be drafted in consultation with ICT Publish as part of the communications toolkit	Nov 2006 Dec 2006

Employee communications toolkit: Presentations Produce guidelines for producing and delivering presentations – including a *power point* users' guide	Will help employees to produce presentations more easily and quickly, providing an efficiency gain for the council	Draft presentation toolkit in consultation with design, to adhere to reviewed corporate identity guidelines, with diversity team, to ensure accessibility of information, and the communications network. Publish as part of the corporate identity toolkit	Sep 2006 Mar 2007
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	A well maintained visual identity should deliver economies of scale and build brand equity. If integrated with new values, the identity will send a clear signal to employees and customers that Herefordshire is committed to positive change. To bring the council together into a single, consistent, coherent and cohesive identity – underpinning one council, one vision, and one brand.	Identify full list of brand applications for review Rationalise several sub brands and identities (current fragmented approach confuses our customers, projects an unprofessional image that is costly to maintain). Agree clear brand values for Herefordshire Council – linked to vision and priorities Formulate highly specified visual identity guidelines to enhance promotion and control of council identity (not to change the logo) Agree strong strap line to promote council's vision and progress Produce web and intranet based style guide Publish new corporate identity tool kit Produce internal marketing strategy to promote the revised identity guide Produce training module for employees who commission print or design Framework to promote and police internally the visual identification policy Establish a licensing agreement for internal and external users of the corporate identity	Sep 2007 Jan 2007 Feb 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Apr 2007 Apr 2007

Design Review in-house design profitability and opportunities to improve return on investment Achieve a better return investment in the brand (higher visibility and recognition by stakeholders; reduced expenditure on print and design)	Greater capacity and profitability in design More effective use of corporate identity to achieve better return on marketing investment	Review print and design revenues and profitability Investigate opportunities to build capacity, profitably Produce marketing strategy to increase business for design	Mar 2007 May 2007 Jul 2007
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.	Supports the improvement strategy for children and young people's services Ensure schools are supported with communications advice and activity as required Improve information flow To promote an understanding of school related services and how to access them Promote the reputation of education within the county and nationally	Agree a set of principles for a communications framework to support the schools (including consultation with HASH). Provide a communications tool kit for schools, backed with a publicity advice service on researching, packaging and placing positive news stories (adding value to the stakeholder relationship). Agree a forward plan based on the school year to ensure we plan effectively for publicity opportunities. The communications unit will also provide an issues management service, acting as a cushion between the school and the media, providing advice, formulating statements and managing press enquiries and press conferences on their behalf. A crisis management plan for schools to produced to ensure that the council and all and any of its schools knows what to do in the event of a serious incident, and works together to respond to media requirements.	Jan 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Ongoing May 2007

Pay and Workforce A new communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy.	To support the transformation vision Promotes organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and key work streams	Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups Draft communications strategy and set targets Secure agreement with management teams Implement strategy in line with transformation vision	Oct 2007 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008

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.	Ensure that effectiveness and frequency of members' communications reflect the pace and change at Herefordshire Council	Identify members' group to establish views and needs on communications Members' survey to secure quantitative data on communication perceptions and requirements Draft members' communications strategy	Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Dec 2006
Members' publications			
Upgrade members' newsletter and service update		Upgrade members' newsletter and service update and increase frequency from quarterly to monthly	Dec 2006
Becoming a councillor		Details how citizens can become councillors, the election process, the role and responsibilities as well as a run down of council services.	Oct 2006
New members' guide		Induction documentation compiled and ready to be printed in time for local elections	May 2007
Members' induction			
Design induction programme for new councillors and returning councillors.	Inducts new members on ethnics, standards, legal duties, protocols and council business	Working closely with democratic services and key operations in directorates across the council, an induction programme is put together with the agreement of group leaders	Oct 2006
Members' toolkit			
Design a comprehensive communications toolkit for elected members Include communications protocols for members as part of this toolkit	Techniques to support elected members in communicating effectively with citizens and working positively with media	Organising ward surgeries and ward walks Partnership working with local organisations Media relations and using the communications protocols Public speaking and events management Engaging diverse communities and equality and diversity guide Using email and building a web site Representing the views of constituents to the council	Jan 2007

CITIZENS			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
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	Supports the vision is for every Herefordshire citizen to have access, at a time and location that is convenient to them, and by any means that suits them, to a single point of contact where they can communicate with a real person, who is trained and empowered to respond effectively to their request across the full range of public services available. Linked to transformation vision and suite of communications strategies for transformation	The communication strategy to be revised in line with the emerging transformational vision for Herefordshire Council The organisation culture required to deliver the vision is also to be mapped out and defined so that the desired behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs can form the basis for objectives and targets in the long-term communications and culture change strategy. Staff opinion survey will provide an opportunity to evaluate staff awareness, understand and support for the transformation project and new ways of working, and will help adjust messages, channels and other activity. Level and nature of responses through the team brief system and the intranet will also help the communications strategy take account of and adjust to levels of awareness, understanding and support. Press coverage on the issue will be evaluated for positive coverage. Feedback forms on staff and partner open days and presentations will also provide evaluation.	Sep 2006 Dec 2006 Sep 2006 Ongoing Ongoing

Customer service			
Promote council services and how to access them	To increase external and internal awareness and understanding of the customer services strategy Ensure services are rooted in solid understanding of public and customers needs and wants	Develop communications strategy to promote customer service developments Promote the development of a better, faster and more responsive service to individual customers Develop the Info customer service brand in line with corporate identity guidelines Promote service promise and customer service standards through leaflet set and web site Customer satisfaction rates at 55 per cent	Oct 2006 Sep 2007
Promote customer complaints system	Help to embed customer relationship management and complaints handing systems	Develop supporting communications strategy Customer satisfaction with how their complaint was handled	 To be determined
Children and young people			
Formalise communications structures and channels across the directorate and key partnerships 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	To support the transformation vision To support the improvement programme with focus on internal communications and a strategy to deliver an enhanced reputation in the professional media, particularly to aid recruitment.	Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate Audit current communications and marketing activity within children and young people's services Audit stakeholder relationships and media contacts Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups Draft communications strategy and set targets Secure agreement with management teams Implement strategy in line with transformation vision	Oct 2007 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008

CITIZENS			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
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	To support the transformation vision To support the improvement programme with focus on internal communications and a strategy to deliver an enhanced reputation in local and professional media.	Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate Audit current communications and marketing activity within children and young people's services Audit stakeholder relationships and media contacts Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups Draft communications strategy and set targets Secure agreement with management teams Implement strategy in line with transformation vision	Oct 2007 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008
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.	Supports commitment to make efficient use of funds, saving operational, lease or high maintenance costs associated with older buildings. Promotes 'one council' ideal; flexible and efficient working; share best practice; and achieve our ambitions to provide excellent, joined up and continually-improving services	Develop and implement a wide ranging communications programme for the council's accommodation strategy The staff opinion survey will provide an opportunity to evaluate staff awareness, understand and support for the accommodate move and new ways of working, and will help adjust messages, channels and other activity. Level and nature of responses through the team brief system and the intranet will also help the communications strategy take account of and adjust to levels of awareness, understanding and support. Press coverage on the issue will be evaluated for positive reportage and reflection of the key messages.	Feb 2006 Sep 2006 Ongoing

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. To build citizen readership, support and regard for the publication To improve readability and accessibility of content and design. Revamp design and content in line with citizen information needs	To capitalise on what is the council's only direct and regular form of communication with citizens to build understanding of, and improve satisfaction with, the council and the services it provides It is the prime means of getting across the council's priorities and themes without distortion To ensure the publication is as inclusive as possible (including those who are hard of sight). To position the publication as adding value to life in Herefordshire	Specify that all advertising that targets the citizens of Herefordshire should be placed with the citizen publication. Exceptions to be cleared by communications. Set editorial policy with a clear set of objectives related to the council's priorities and campaigns for the year. Provide content that is welcomed by readers, improves the overall service of the council and is not seen as 'political' is nature. Feature citizens as part of the council service. Proposal to increase frequency from 4 to 6 issues a year – to be funded by increased advertising (from council directorates, partners and local business) Redesign using the council's new publications and corporate identity guidelines Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent	Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Feb 2007 Mar 2007 Sep 2008

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.	By improving familiarity with the range of services provided, the council will improve favourability and satisfaction with the council Enhance understanding of the council's 'total life' service, which impacts positively quality of life for all our diverse communities in Herefordshire.	To use the 'life events' format to improve access to services by structuring information on council services around customer needs and what makes sense for them, rather than the council's own organisational structure. Provide contact details for all major services Use the Herefordshire Matters brand (a special edition of the publication) Promote pride and celebrate the quality and diversity of life in Herefordshire (festivals, events, iconic buildings, street markets, parks, leisure centres, theatres, walks and more) which is facilitated by the council Promote partnership working with other organisations and encourage joint working within the organisation by providing transparency of structure Publicise customer service standards and complaints procedures Promote the consultation framework and Herefordshire Council's principles governing consultation Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent	Feb 2007 Sep 2008
Citizen Publications: Guide to Herefordshire Produce a high quality guide to Herefordshire (with third party publishing house, providing it is cost neutral to the council)	To promote Herefordshire within the county and to external destination decision makers	To work with an established partner with a good reputation for producing well supported destination publications. The publication will be funded entirely by external advertising and must be of no cost to the council.	Nov 2006 Mar 2007

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. 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.	Supports the medium term financial strategy, promoting positive messages concerning the council's financial management and stability and its strong progress against its vision and priorities The pocket summary can be carried and referred to by elected members, managers, partners and key stakeholders, and made readily available to interested citizens.	Full annual report and pocket summary to be written, designed and approved and distributed	Sep 2006 And each year thereafter
Citizen Publications: Council Tax Leaflet Produce an easy to read summary of council tax and precept matters	Sets out for citizens the rates, bands, discounts, exception and payment options as well as an overview of how the money is spent in support of services	Produce an easy to read and relevant council tax leaflet on time to budget	Mar 2007 Annual
Citizen Campaigns: Pride in Herefordshire To increase the percentage of citizens who feel proud of Herefordshire and are happy to live here	The council's efforts to build pride in the county will be well received by citizens	Pride index to track citizen 'feel good' factor about the county and the council (benchmark to be set through citizen survey) Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent	Mar 2007 Sep 2007

Citizen Campaigns: Finance To promote the council's approach to finance as encapsulated in the medium term financial management strategy	To build citizen confidence in council financial management To foster an internal and external understanding of the serious financial challenges for the future and the need to take prudent steps ahead of significant pressures on funding	Communicate through media activity and publications the key messages for the medium term financial management strategy: Strong and prudent financial management Significant and growing pressures on funding Resource challenges of delivering services through a large and sparsely populated area Entrepreneurial approach to income from property, assets and trading Challenges posed by the changing population profile To promote the new financial culture and sound financial management as a non-negotiable to all managers	Oct 2006 Ongoing
Citizen Campaigns: Direct Debit A campaign to persuade citizens and businesses in Herefordshire to pay their taxes by direct debit. The aim is 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.	Establish key benefits to citizens and business of paying by direct debit Identify the blocks to paying by direct debit and how to overcome them Link the 'saving time' message with 'spending time' with the county's attractions (prize draws for leisure activities) Engage and reward staff for their role in promoting the uptake of direct debit. Win an award for an effective and innovative marketing campaign.	Launch campaign Increase percentage of citizens paying council tax by direct debit from 56.82 per cent to 60 per cent Increase percentage of businesses paying business rates by direct debit from 49.76 per cent (Dec 2005) to 53 per cent	Oct 2006 Apr 2007 Apr 2007

CITIZENS			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
Citizen Campaign: Local democracy Develop a campaign to promote local democracy and how to engage in it more effectively	To ensure citizens understand how they can influence decisions and how their views are sought and taken into account. Promote scrutiny workings and recommendations Promote community forums Promote elections	A wide ranging communications strategy to be developed Link with member communications programme Support implementation of community involvement strategy Percentage of Herefordshire adult residents who feel that the council does enough to give local people the opportunity to influence decisions (annual satisfaction survey)	Jan 2007 To be determined
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	To show how the council recognises the extreme sensitively of the issue and has gone the extra mile to ensure there has been sufficient public communication, consultation and contribution relating to the location of the market.	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. Cabinet report informs the communications plan Distribution list to be compiled (members of the public with an interest in the location of the market (including campaigners); local MPs and MEP; Herefordshire councillors; parish councillors in the north east quadrant; auctioneers and other interested parties). Letters to be drafted Press announcement to be drafted Single page briefs on transport, property, planning, and legal issues to be prepared.	To be determined

CITIZENS			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
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. Compliance with Civil Contingencies Act 2004	Work with partners to deliver annual programme of risk assessment, emergency planning and exercising. Maintain service continuity planning and management within the council. Develop a robust crisis management system to prepare the council and strategic partners to respond professionally to major incidents or issues. Identify risk areas Identify key personnel and spokespeople, plus back up personnel, and secure home contact details to produce contact list Put spokespeople through media training Work with emergency planning to agree incident guidelines Produce incident protocols (a tighter version of the general press protocols) and specific guidelines Integrate with incident contact list Stakeholder contact list Produce an incident book with contacts, guidelines and responsibilities (hard copy and electronic (password protected)) Secure corporate endorsement Test systems in exercise with emergency planning Review incident book and guidelines Log guidelines as part of the communications tool kit Share crisis management system with the local government community Gain recognition in professional press To provide advice to businesses and other organisations on effective communications within the community in the event of an emergency.	Ongoing Jan 2007 Jan 2007 Feb 2007 Feb 2007 Feb 2007 Feb 2007 Feb 2007 Mar 2007 Apr 2007 Jun 2007 Jun 2007 Jul 2007 Sep 2007 Nov 2007 Jan 2008

Industrial action To establish communications plans to minimise the impact of any future dispute.	To ensure the council can convey important and relevant information to citizens quickly in line with its commitment to protect the vulnerable	To be able to distribute, where the council is able, details of services that may be exempt, or delivered despite industrial action, as well as information on services that will not be available To ensure we keep informed citizens, employees and elected members. To support switchboard and our Info services, which will come under pressure with requests for information from the public	Sep 2006

MEDIA			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Targets**
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 To improve responsiveness of the council to the media	To present a professional, co-ordinated and consistent approach that supports stakeholder relationships. Working protocols will support and govern all communications activity within the council – including press relations. Without clear protocols that guide officers and elected members, the council's reputation is vulnerable. Working protocols with help the council to respond more efficiently to media enquiries	The protocols drafted with the support of legal services, consultation with other affected parties, such as the communications network CMB, the leader and group leaders to consider Full council support to ensure the protocols are bought into Integrate into the communications toolkit to guide officers Integrated into the employee code of conduct Share and promote established working protocols with the local government community	Oct 2006 Nov 2006 Dec 2006 Dec 2006 Jan 2007 Mar 2007

Media: Performance			
To increase productivity with increased numbers of press releases and statements produced by the communications unit	To increase the volume of positive media coverage on council vision, priorities, decisions and services	To increase from an estimated 180 a year in 2005/06 to 500 a year in 2006/07 and building to 1000 a year by 2007/08 Difficult to increase productivity beyond 1000 a year without increasing staff costs – but improved targeting will improve coverage further	Ongoing Ongoing
To ensure press releases are packaged professionally and have strong news value	Strong news value, linked with appropriate messages, will help secure 'share of voice'	Percentage of press releases used by the media to be maintained at 90 per cent plus	Ongoing
To maintain a responsive press enquiry service for local, professional and national media	Helps to build a positive working relationship with the press and ensures the council promotes key messages	Volumes of media enquires have risen by more than 300 per cent over the course of 2006. The communications unit will continue to ensure journalists' deadlines are met 99 per cent of the time	Ongoing
To increase the volume of positive press coverage	Promotes understanding of council services, decisions and direction	Volume of press coverage to increase from estimated 1,000 press cuttings a year in 2005/06 to 2,000 a year in 2006/07 to 3,000 a year by 2007/06	Ongoing
To establish evaluation systems to measure percentage of positive to negative press coverage	High volume of largely positive media coverage influences citizen satisfaction rates	Establish 80 per cent positive or neutral coverage against 20 per cent negative by 2007/08	Ongoing
Increase volume of broadcast reports featuring Herefordshire Council	Provides for more impartial and in-depth coverage of council issues; has more credibility than some print media and has a growing audience	Increase volume of broadcast (radio and television reports) featuring the council and the county from estimated 200 per year in 2005/06 to 500 in 2006/07 to 600 a year by 2007/08 Increase customer satisfaction level to 60 per cent	Ongoing Sep 2007

Media: Evaluation Investigate a performance and media management system for the press office Shared software system helps track issues and responses	To improve management of media activities and enquiries Provide sophisticated performance management information	Evaluate performance management systems currently on the market Recommended decision Implementation (depending on cost efficiencies secured elsewhere in the communications budget)	Jun 2007 Sep 2007 Apr 2008
Media: Criticism Develop an objective, proactive and constructive approach to press and public criticism Capture the value in criticism to use as a means of continual improvement	Helps to prevent conflict escalation, understand more about stakeholders' needs, avoid defensiveness and turn critics into supporters. Helps position the council as a mature, progressive and learning organisation. Turning criticism around improves self esteem and morale	Develop a set of principles around listening to and visibly acknowledging the existence of conflict; objectively assess criticism, show acceptance if justified and robustly engage if it is not; secure third party endorsements and build positive relationships. Promote internally the essential function of the media to raise concerns on behalf of local people; further internalise press criticism in the service areas through use of press cuttings analysis, agree a positive approach to criticism and buy in of service teams.	Oct 2006
Media: Induction Inductions for new journalists and visits to communications	Increase understanding of respective roles and needs	Formal induction programme to be created and implemented	Dec 2006
Media: Customer Service Develop a set of customer care standards for the media	Helps ensure we meet journalists' information requirements to deadline	Consult press informally on their changing requirements Create a customer satisfaction questionnaire Set benchmark for improvement Structure press office around requirements Establish monitoring systems Report on performance	Jan 2007 Feb 2007 Apr 2007 Apr 2007 Apr 2007 Oct 2007

Media: Virtual Press Office Develop a 24-hour virtual press office service using the council's web site	Increase and improve access to the communications unit, council information and decisions for journalists and the public Provide the communications unit with early warning of developing issues (as questions are raised out of usual office hours).	Consult press on requirements Scope out the service and set performance indicators Develop solution with ICT services Develop daily on line news service for press and the community Agree process to log committee papers (with democratic services) Compile media briefing notes on key issues Agree working practices with press office (out of hours response) Launch of service Monitor usage and customer satisfaction and performance Digital on line photography service (promoting royalty-free, high-quality images of Herefordshire and council services) News exchange agreements (build community on-line news service) Integrate with crisis management and emergency planning Market the system to other local authorities	Jan 2007 Mar 2007 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008 Oct 2008 Oct 2008 Oct 2008 Nov 2008
Media: Copyright Explore copyright issues relating to use of newspaper cuttings internally	Keep service areas informed and provide research resource but reduce expenditure	Investigate alternative but less costly means of making press coverage available to internal audience Secure savings and launch new service	Nov 2006 Apr 2007

GOVERNMENT			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Target**
Government Relations: Framework and strategy			
To create a government relations framework and strategy.	To promote a 'fair deal for Herefordshire' – increasing levels of government funding in locally provided services.	Develop government relations strategy	May 2008
		Encompass identification of agreed policies, issues and opportunities that need to be progressed in support of the development of the county, the identification of key individuals who have an influence in terms of these issues, a contact strategy and management system involving lead members and executive officers, systems for evaluation of activity, and a series of programmes, integrated where appropriate with planned media activity, to enhance the reputation of the council with national and regional government.	
	To promote the outstanding return on investment achieved at Herefordshire – and opportunities for further improvement if fair levels of funding were provided	Research perceptions and attitudes among key influencers in national and regional government	Jan 2008
		Produce stakeholder analysis – identifying those who will have a strong influence on and a strong interest in how Herefordshire is funded – to inform the communications strategy	Feb 2008
		Map out income streams received by all public service providers – how much, where from, what for, in what form or formula, and how long do they last	Mar 2008
		Compile understanding of how allocations are determined and the 'triggers' or 'rules' for securing funding	Mar 2008
		Compare with national and regional averages and other unitary councils and neighbours	Apr 2008
		Quantify what the shortfall means in real terms for local people	Apr 2008
		Share experiences in applying for funding – detailing who we deal with, how decisions are made, feedback received and possible misconceptions or prejudices	May 2008
		Link to government relations strategy	Ongoing

EQUALITY, PERFORMANCE & DEVELOPMENT			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Target**
Equality			
To promote diversity in the workplace, helping to ensure that awareness of diversity becomes embedded in all activities and functions	Help build understanding and support for equality and diversity as a central and mainstream issue for the council	Ensure equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit	Dec 2000
		Work closely with the diversity team in publicising their programmes and activities, including training modules, consultations and working groups	Ongoing
Ensure equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit	Make the council as accessible as possible to as many communities as possible	Challenge local media on inappropriate reporting of diversity issues	Ongoing
To work closely with the diversity team in promoting the importance of equality impact assessments	Meet existing and new statutory requirements in respect of race, disability & gender, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.	To complete year 3 equality impact assessments.	Sep 2006
The communications unit to achieve Level 2 of the Local Authorities Equality Standard.		Development and implementation of monitoring system in place. Unit attended diversity training Action plans monitored and embedded in service plans DMT quarterly progress reports	Dec 2006 Jan 2007 Mar 2007
Freedom of information			
To promote council responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act	Shows Herefordshire Council is responsive to requests for information	Internal communications strategy to promote FOI behaviours Continued monitoring of register Ensure the unit achieves 100 per cent response to Freedom of Information requests within 20 days	Ongoing

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	To support the £135K Gershon cash and efficiency savings target across the directorate To support the medium term financial management strategy in keeping down council tax increases	Review all individual cost areas to identify saving opportunities Streamline processes, assets and structures - securing efficiency savings in several areas of communications activity	Sep 2006 By Mar 2007
Customer responsiveness Develop new customer service standards for the communications unit	To deliver an enhanced communications and marketing service to the directorates and service areas Link to media satisfaction study	Develop and promote communications customer satisfaction standards Customer satisfaction index for press release production Customer satisfaction index for design and print New customer service standards to be agreed and implemented New corporate voice network operational Number of telephone calls answered as a % of all telephone calls received % of telephone calls answered in 15 seconds	Jan 2007 To be determined 95 per cent 80 per cent

Staff review and development To create a comprehensive skills development matrix for the key areas of performance in the communications unit To promote key skills in respect of the effective planning, performance management and delivery of services.	To drive continuous improvement in standards of services To develop positively the skills and experience of all staff within the communications unit	Clearly defined requirements within job descriptions and person specs (job evaluation done) Skills matrix developed Continuance of comprehensive programme of training and development All SRD interviews carried out	Apr 2006 Jan 2007 Ongoing 100% return of staff SRD
Winning awards To improve the reputation of Herefordshire Council through the winning of national prestigious awards To submit as many realistic award submissions as possible: but based on a corporate decision To manage corporately the production of consistently high quality award submissions	Raise profile and regard among opinion formers, locally as well as within the local, regional and national government communities. Raise morale of employees	Project plan to be agreed by CMB Project manager in the service area will gather evidence to support submission. Communications support will ensure the final bid is produced professionally and in line with corporate guidelines. To submit 10 award entries during 2006/07 and achieve 2 nominations	Oct 07 and ongoing