

# REVISED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

## PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CABINET

12TH OCTOBER, 2006

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### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

To approve a substantial revision of the Council's communications strategy for 2006/07 as a result of new communications channels and programmes being launched, new objectives and targets being set and the production of a wide range of communications plans to support new programmes aimed at achieving the transformation of the authority and the way it delivers services to local people.

### Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards. It was included in the Forward Plan.

### Recommendation

**THAT the revised Communications Strategy be approved.**

### Reasons

Although there is a communication strategy for 2006/07 currently being implemented, the communications unit has set challenging new targets for productivity which substantially expand its activities now and further to 2008.

### Considerations

1. A substantial revision of the 2006-07 communications strategy has been undertaken to take account of increased levels and channels of communication and challenging new targets for 2006 to 2008.
2. New, robust and measurable internal communications channels have been launched together with feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management. A leadership forum is organised quarterly with the aim of building a community of leaders to help drive the transformation of the council.
3. Productivity continues to improve, in terms of media coverage, producing information and responding to media enquiries. Specific communications plans have been produced for several key projects and a government relations programme will be tasked with achieving a better deal for Herefordshire in terms of funding for locally

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Robert Blower, Head of Communications, on (01432) 383510

delivered services.

4. The strategy is the basis for building an effective network of communications champions across the council who will help shape and drive communications improvements and act as ambassadors for good communications practice. A communications tool kit is included in the strategy, which will help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels.
5. The strategy will develop dedicated Member communication channels geared towards providing the information that Members want, and in the form and to the frequency they need it. Content and frequency of Members' newsletter and service updates, will be upgraded and new guides to becoming a Councillor, and for new Members, will be produced along with a new induction programme and a communications toolkit for elected Members.
6. The revised communications strategy does not depend on increased funding for communications activity over the 2006-08 period of implementation.

## **Risk Management**

Weekly updates on communications activity and progress, together with monthly performance management reports, together with reference to the corporate and directorate risk monitors and risk management elements within individual programmes are essential elements in managing risk associated with the communications strategy.

## **Alternative Options**

A possible alternative option is to continue to implement the current communications strategy without the more demanding objectives outlined in the revised strategy.

## **Consultees**

Corporate Management Board and the Communication Network (comprising communications professionals in all directorates)

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Action Plan for Communications

## **Background Papers**

None identified.