



**South
Derbyshire
District Council**

**Corporate Communications Strategy
2010-2015**

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Appendix 1

Corporate Communications Campaigns

South Derbyshire District Council

Corporate Communications Strategy 2010-2015

1. An overview of local authority communications

Nationally local government public relations teams used to be basically issuing press releases while reacting to media enquiries. In the last few years it has changed to providing a more proactive service that includes identifying, developing and co-ordinating targeted and measurable campaigns. This change clearly focuses the work of communications teams to not only the achievement of Corporate objectives but also to improve reputation, increase resident satisfaction and prove that our team helps to make life better for the residents in South Derbyshire.

At the same time, the focus is clearly moving away from the silos of individual public sector organisations. In the Place Survey 2008-2009 people were asked what they thought about public services as a whole. It is therefore important that joined up messages and approaches are used wherever possible.

This Corporate Communications Strategy does not repeat the information provided in the first Corporate Communications Strategy 2009-2014, but uses it as a springboard to a better perception by our public of our achievements.

Through the Corporate Communications Strategy we will ensure that we are clear about what the Council stands for and what our residents need from us.

2. The national New Reputation Project

Corporate communications is the guardian and promoter of our reputation. Communications works with the Policy Team to shift opinion, influence decision-making and change behaviour.

The Communications Team will be using the New Reputation Project from LGComms to drive the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The New Reputation Project provides research-based rationale to enable local authorities to lead their communities.

It highlights the three big issues.

1. Leadership

Reputation is built on three things: what people say about you; what you say about yourself and how your actions and behaviours reflect what you stand for.

The first element is of course affected largely by the other two. It is therefore essential that our organisations are clear about what we stand for, how we are expected to behave and how we communicate our vision.

Our leadership, both political and corporate, should leave our organizations in no doubt about this foundation of reputation. However, leadership is not just being clear about what our reputation is built upon but also being seen to be committed to it and inspiring our organizations to behave consistently in ways that support what we stand for.

2. *Brand*

Being able to articulate, in an authentic way, what we stand for and the behaviours that will define and support this are essential. This is not just about getting a good logo and a good slogan.

- What about your council?
- Who are you, what do you do and what do you want to be famous for?

Councils are adept at writing corporate plans that include strategic visions and core values. However, we can still improve on a narrative or story that can encapsulate what we stand for and our values in clear understandable language.

- Is the narrative in your corporate plan believable and widely accepted by your residents and staff?
- If we were asked in a pub by a stranger what we stand for or what we believe in, could we explain it in three sentences? More to the point, does it chime with what our residents want from us?

The development of a narrative that is authentic, explains the purpose of the Council and its beliefs in clear and believable language is essential in building reputation with staff and residents.

3. *Our Communications*

Once we have a clear way of explaining what we stand for, which is in tune with what residents want and the way our staff deliver services backs this up, we need strategic communications to become the guardians of our reputation.

We need to equip our communication leaders with the skills and resources necessary to promote and defend our reputation.

3. Key aims of the Corporate Communications Strategy

By concentrating on promoting the Council's reputation, the Corporate Communications Strategy aims to ensure a high level of external and internal understanding that we are

- Proving we provide value for money
- Always informing and engaging residents and staff
- Building trust and confidence in what we do
- Showing we are improving key services
- Focusing on changing lives for the better

Each year the Corporate Communications Strategy will deliver evaluated campaigns based on the Corporate Plan. This will, provide linked activities to promote a shared goal where the expertise of the Communications Team works to enhance the public perception of the Council and, over the long term, tries to change specific behaviour.

Campaign branding in the fully integrated internal and external communication campaign, including marketing, graphics, branding, online communications and media relations will aim at successfully engaging residents.

It must also be noted that this Strategy closely links with the Councils Consultation Strategy to provide an inclusive approach to the engagement and communication with residents in South Derbyshire.

4. **Place Survey**

We have been recently judged by a national 'Place Survey', like all other public sector providers. In the 2008 Survey **nationally** seven out of ten residents did not feel that they could influence decision-making in their own area. Most think that their councils do not offer opportunities to engage with council activity. There has been a 6% decline to 26% in South Derbyshire which is a little below the national average of 29%. The Place Survey has now been cancelled by the government and we will look at alternative options in order to measure satisfaction on services, Value For Money and if people are feeling informed about what we are doing.

5. Five Rules of Reputation

All campaigns will use the New Reputation Project from LGComms to drive the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. An outline of corporate campaigns can be found in Appendix 1.

We will ensure that the five "rules for reputation" will be an integral part of all campaigns.

More details of the New Reputation Project and the background information around it, can be found at www.lga.gov.uk/reputation

5.1. Proving we provide value for money.

Rule

Perceived value for money is the most powerful driver for the public's satisfaction with councils by some margin.

Why this matters?

Eighty of the top 100 councils for value for money are in the top 100 councils for overall council satisfaction.

We need to ensure that we are getting credit with the public for providing value for money services. Value for money is the most powerful driver of overall council satisfaction. But residents do not perceive good value for money in purely monetary terms.

While communicating effectively and regularly about the services we provide and explaining how Council Tax is spent, the more local people see local public services as *promoting their interests*, the more likely that they will see us as offering good value for money.

LGComms research has shown that Council Tax and the quality of services do have a role in influencing perceptions of value for money, but it's more important to inform residents and be seen to promote the interests of residents. In the last Place Survey there is still a strong correlation between the public service informed rating and overall council satisfaction.

What we do already?

With effective internal communications, staff are more likely to be advocates speaking well of the Council to their friends, families and colleagues, proving the value of the services that are provided. Information about the Council is much more likely to be believed if it comes from a source that is close to the recipient such as family, friends, work colleagues rather than when it is directly issued by the Council.

What more we will do?

In the coming year with the new national financial reality, the Communications Team will be ready to roll out joint public services campaigns, if required.

To show that we are giving value for money, we need to increase satisfaction, as reflected in the last Place Survey, on a wide range of Council services, which are perceived through a 'one council' branding.

We can prove that we provide value for money service by ensuring that our campaigns, publications and media message are actively

- Informing residents of range of services we provide
- Showing residents what they want is what we want
- Engaging residents and staff in setting budgets and priorities
- Explaining how council tax is set and what money is spent on
- Keeping the streets clean and tidy

5.2 Always to inform and engage residents and staff

Rule

That well informed residents are more likely to be satisfied with their council and feel it offers value for money.

Why this matters?

Almost six in ten (59%) of the top 100 councils at informing residents are in the top 100 councils for council satisfaction. In the top 50 councils for council satisfaction only three had below-average informed ratings.

Public engagement is as important a driver to public perceptions as our performance in dealing with anti-social behaviour. With effective two-way internal communications, engagement is the key to keeping employees motivated and effective. It can show staff how they contribute to the good the Council does for the community.

What we do already?

As set out in the original Corporate Communications Strategy, consultation is a vital part of communication. The consultation process involves listening, opening up opportunities to participate, tailoring policies accordingly, feeding back the positive and the negative and then listening again.

Communications is about a shared way of working, a culture that recognises and celebrates success, communicates clearly and effectively and explains the hard choices. Good communications, whatever the financial climate, can help ensure better engagement and so improve the public standing of South Derbyshire District Council.

The staff survey carried out in 2009 showed that 70% of employees were positive about working for the Council in terms of valuing and being proud to work for the organisation, and feeling that the Council is making a difference. This is a 3% increase from 2008. There has also been a 3% increase in the number of staff believing that the Council is having a positive impact on society.

This led to the Council being recognised as one of the Top 75 Best Places to Work in the Public Sector in the national survey completed by The Sunday Times. We also received recognition as 'one to watch' in the Best Companies national index.

We will use internal communications to further embed a sense of purpose and pride in our achievements which is accepted across our organisation and which makes life better for our residents. We also actively involve the Trade Unions when communicating with our employees.

What more we will do?

The corporate campaigns, media work, e-communications and design will all be focused on informing and engaging residents and staff.

The website and social media will be developed so that rather than sending out corporate messages, we are engaged in effective conversations with the public, with stakeholders and with staff. Social media will be part of our campaigns only when we know it will be effective. There are risks in conversations about us that we cannot control so channels will be regularly monitored and information kept up to date.

5.3 Building trust and confidence in what we do.

Rule

Building trust and confidence in what we do is critical to restore public confidence.

Why this matters?

The Place Survey asked residents how well they thought their public services promoted residents' interests, acted on their concerns and treated people fairly. Positively, the majority of residents see their public services as treating residents fairly but only a minority see public services as acting on residents' concerns or promoting their interests.

What is significant here is how effective these factors are at predicting differences in overall council satisfaction levels. Among these factors are perceptions around acting on local residents' concerns, this can explain about half the variation in overall council satisfaction.

Nationally there has been a reduction of confidence in public organisations. A key element of the Corporate Communications campaigns for 2010-2011 is to show that we are open, transparent and honest in all our work and that we ensure that we safeguard our good reputation.

People need to see it to believe it. To build trust on a basic level we need to show that we provide services that are effective, reasonably priced, and have a social value through supporting individuals and communities.

What we do already?

Through our consultation and communication we can ensure a deep insight into the characteristics, beliefs and opinions of our residents and stakeholders through a social, economic and cultural understanding of what drives behaviour and issues. We can have two-way conversations about things that really matter to them. Councils need to listen and respond.

As well as the work of the Council, we need to ensure that contracted organisations also maintain high standards of probity.

Councils that offer more opportunities for engagement tend to be more highly regarded. The Corporate Communications Strategy puts into action the Council's commitment that local people should be better informed about the work of the Council and more involved in decisions about services.

What more we will do?

The Council needs to continue to keep its promises. We should be ready to apologise for any mistakes and learn lessons from any errors and from others seen as providing good quality services. With a drive towards the 'Big Society' it is important that we build trust and confidence with all public service providers.

Other actions will include

- Conduct an annual 'You said, we did' campaign to continue to engage with residents
- Produce our Annual Report to demonstrate to residents that we are keeping our promises
- Show residents that they have effective ways of challenging us or of making a complaint and that we welcome feedback to improve services

5.4 Improve key services and show you are doing so

Rule

We need to continue to improve our key services and evidence this.

Why this matters?

In the eyes of the public there are four top services in terms of reputation. These key services are street cleaning, refuse collection, parks and leisure. If we take the top 100 councils for the four services, we find that two-thirds (66%) are in the top 100 councils for overall satisfaction.

Street cleaning is seen as the most important service in terms of influencing satisfaction with our councils. In the Place Survey, it alone is better at predicting council satisfaction than all the other universal council services combined. If we take the top 100 councils for street cleaning, we find that 61% are in the top 100 councils for overall satisfaction.

Research has also proved the common sense notion that street cleaning is the main driver of public perceptions of value for money and council efficiency.

What we do already?

Corporate branding is of paramount importance in the new communications environment. It shows the strength of our vision and values, our authenticity and our behaviour. It will determine reputation in the terms of how people think about our services and talk about what we do when we are not there.

Communications is about developing relationships and building networks where conversations can take place about the services we provide. It is not only through traditional routes such as face-to-face contacts, media coverage but also through the improved use of technology and in particular social networking applications.

Nationally in the last Place Survey council service satisfaction scores have dropped across the Country. In South Derbyshire our score dropped by 9% to 49% but this was still above the national average of 45%.

What more we will do?

It is vitally important that we make sure that people are aware of what we do and that we get credit for this work. Research into the results of the last Place Survey shows that trust, fairness and delivery account for half the variation in levels of council satisfaction.

Through our corporate campaigns we need to promote our signature services, the top four services that enhance reputation and add to the impression of value for money in the eyes of the public. These are

- street cleaning;
- refuse collection,
- parks and leisure.
- customer service.

5.5 Focus on ‘changing lives for the better’

Rule

We must put the customer first and prevent a multiplication of brands and strategies they don't understand or care about. We need to make sure that we connect the improvements to people's lives and to the areas in which they live with the council brand.

Why this matters?

We need to connect improvements in South Derbyshire with the work of the Council. Although people who like where they live tend to like their council more, it is not a strong driver of residents' satisfaction with councils.

According to the last Place Survey the top four factors in making somewhere a good place to live are

- levels of crime
- health services
- affordable decent housing
- public transport

What we do already?

The Communications Team will maintain its effective relationship with the media, while continuing to be proactive in anticipating stories and quick at responding to press enquiries. The purpose of pro-active corporate communications is to improve the trust in and the reputation of the Council, so as to improve the quality of life for everyone in South Derbyshire.

What more we will do?

The Council's role as the only democratically elected organisation specifically representing the people of South Derbyshire needs to be highlighted. Area forums, which encourage dialogue with and accountability from the Police and the County Council should be further promoted and developed. We need to ensure that the improvements in people's lives and in the areas in which they live are connected with the council brand.

We can take the lead in changing perceptions about public services by being at the forefront of developing clarity of purpose across all public service organisations while monitoring cohesion and engaging communities in decision-making.

6. Equality and Fairness

In line with the Council's Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme, this procedure will be subject to an Equality Impact Risk Assessment. Any outcome from this will be considered to develop the Corporate Communications Strategy and ensure that it has no adverse effect on any particular group of employees.

Appendix A – Campaigns 2010 – 2011

Corporate Plan Theme	Name	Description	Lead Officer	Link to Corporate Plan priority	Link to Place Survey Indicators/Actions
Sustainable Growth and Opportunity	Better Future	Promoting the work around the ongoing development of the LDF outlining the plan for development in South Derbyshire over the next 20 years	Ian Bowen	1.3 Sustainable development - affordable housing and environment and planning	Feeling informed about local services and what is happening in the district, NI5 - general satisfaction with the local area
Value for Money	Better Community	Focussing on the different areas around the district and promoting the work that is going on each locality through the Council and with its partners. Raising awareness of this work whilst focussing on the outcomes for local people in these areas.	Martin Guest	4.1 Meeting community needs, 4.5 High performing services	NI 5 - General satisfaction with the local area. Launch a communications campaign 'year of the community', focusing on particular areas across the District.
Lifestyle Choices	Better Lifestyle	An overarching campaign that brings together the work we are doing as a Council and in partnership across the district to encourage healthy, fit and active lifestyles across all communities.	Stuart Batchelor	3.1 Promoting healthy facilities and lifestyles	Ni 119 - Overall health and wellbeing. Satisfaction with sport and leisure. Publicising the activities available for young people in South Derbyshire.
Sustainable Growth and Opportunity	Better Opportunities	Highlighting the work going on in the Swadlincote Town Centre and its impact on the redevelopment of the area bring investment and jobs into the district.	Mike Roylance	1.1 Economic development skills and training	Feeling informed about local services and what is happening in the district
Value for Money	Better Council	Encouraging residents to get involved with democracy at a local level. This will include work around encouraging people to vote and how participation in local democracy helps in terms of local decision making and place shaping	Andrea McCaskie	4.4 High standards of corporate governance	NI3 - Civic Participation in the area, NI4 - local decision making Promote and implement the Sustainable Communities Act,
Safe and Secure	Better Care	Promoting the work we do to enable vulnerable people to remain in their homes for as long as possible and celebrating the 25 year of Careline	Ros White	2.1 Promoting independence, security and inclusion through the provision of decent housing	NI138 Satisfaction with people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood NI139 The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently
Sustainable Growth and Opportunity	Better Recycling	Publicising the work we are doing to encourage residents, businesses and visitors to recycle across the district.	Gill Coates	1.3 Sustainable development - affordable housing and environment and planning	Satisfaction with waste and recycling services. During 2010, hold five big clean-up events around the District
Value for Money	Better Services	Looking at the way we are delivering change across the Council to make our services more effective and delivering improvements across the district	Nigel Glossop	4.2 Increasing efficiency	Council delivering VFM services. A concerted communications effort to raise awareness of the Council and to promote that the Council is performing well.