

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8 March 2005

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Jan Richmond – Chief Executive

Summary

1. To seek comments from Scrutiny on the draft Communications Strategy and associated Action Plan.

Introduction

2. In 2002 Middlesbrough Council recognised the need to improve its communications with all stakeholders. The 2002 CPA inspection also highlighted communications as an area that the Council needed to address. The Council commissioned a review by external consultants DTW into Council Communications. This review made a number of recommendations that have been acted on by the Council.

Evidence / Discussion

3. Since 2002 significant progress in improving both internal and external communications has been made.
4. Internal progress made includes:
 - appointment of a communications manager at a senior level
 - routine dissemination of CMT agendas, reports and minutes to all staff via lotus notes
 - twice-yearly presentations by the Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Executive – Performance and Policy to the management team of each department

- annual presentation to all staff delivered by the Mayor and the Chief Executive
- quarterly senior staff meetings focused on emerging corporate issues
- improvements to the employee newsletter – Middlesbrough Matters and an employee advisory board
- development of a council wide communications map
- introduction of a corporate induction programme
- introduction of a corporate appraisal scheme
- production of a People Strategy
- introduction of the works council
- improved trade union consultation
- high level engagement with employees affected by Job Evaluation
- service area away days for communication development of teams and services
- better engagement with service areas about Council information and marketing publications

5. External progress made includes:

- appointment of a communications manager
- interim website refresh
- Mayors meetings (transport and crime)
- improved media relations
- development of a media protocol
- new logo rolled out across the council
- development of the Middlesbrough Council identity
- improved communication with hard to reach groups e.g. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) network established and working effectively, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (VDA) established, 'Race together' employment initiative
- production of the Consultation strategy
- Improvements to Middlesbrough News the paper distributed to all households in Middlesbrough
- improved external signage

Conclusion

6. The Council has made significant progress in rolling out and embedding various actions that have improved communications. However, to assist further improvements and to ensure that the Council's aims and objectives in relation to communication are clear a Communications Strategy and associated action plan has been produced and is attached for information and comment.

AUTHOR: Karen Robinson
TEL NO: 01642 729557