

CHESHIRE EAST

CABINET

Date of meeting: 7 October 2008
Report of: Portfolio Holder (Performance and Capacity)
Title: Stakeholder Communications Strategy

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Cheshire East (CE) Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has, because of its position in the public arena, a large and diverse body of stakeholders who need to be considered.

The purpose of this strategy is to state how the programme will effectively engage with key external stakeholders to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the vision of the new Council and how to contact and engage with it

2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To approve the strategy and proposed communications activity.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

- 3.1 Some of the activities outlined in the Communications Strategy will require funding via transitional budgets.

4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

- 4.1 Ongoing costs of stakeholder engagement such as a regular publication or events will be required.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None identified.

6.0 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Support and engagement from stakeholders will be a critical success factor for Cheshire East Council (CEC) to establish effective service deliver and partnership working from 1 April 2009.

7.0 Background and Options

- 7.1 The People and Places programme is explicit in its commitment to delivering strong and effective partnerships to develop a public service to benefit residents and those who work to provide services in Cheshire.

A Statement of Community Involvement (SoCI) for CE is being produced and the programme Stakeholder Strategy is designed to align with this. SoCI aims are to ensure that all sections of the community, from individual members of the public through to representative organisations, have the opportunity to participate in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Development Documents; and to make representations on planning applications to be taken into account in the new Council's decisions on them.

A robust stakeholder engagement strategy is fundamental to the fulfilment of other key objectives including:

- The Council's ability to provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership, which will serve its communities better.
- Exerting a powerful influence in the region and working with the city regions both in shaping long term planning and securing benefits for our communities.
- Establishing viable and effective area/neighbourhood working arrangements that deliver services in the way communities want and which respond to local needs and aspirations.

Getting the approach to Stakeholder Engagement right will enable the innovative concept of the virtual public service visioned for CE to become a reality.

- 7.2 Cabinet has recognised that the Council needs to be explicit in setting clear communication objectives. These break down into two sets of objectives:
- Developing an effective media relations strategy – under development
 - Developing an effective customer contact strategy – currently awaiting outcome of the customer contact workstream

7.3 **Guiding Principles**

Recommended corporate principles to underpin the strategy:

- Openness and transparency in conducting Council business
- A willingness to listen to customers
- Consistency and fairness
- Upholding the reputation of the new council
- CEC will aspire to be a flagship authority seeking out and pioneering best practice

Core Values

As approved by Cheshire East Cabinet:

- **A**ct with integrity and challenge others do to the same
- **S**upport and help colleagues and customers to grow, learn and develop
- **P**ush to deliver our promises and make the right things happen for customers
- **I**nvolve, communicate and engage with others, valuing all contributions
- **R**espond positively to change and find ways to improve the services we deliver
- **E**mpower colleagues, customers and communities to find the right solutions

7.4 **Customer Access**

The Cheshire East LGR Transition Programme contains the Customer Access Project. This project aims to ensure the delivery of equitable, accessible and efficient customer services by CEC collaborating where possible with Cheshire West & Chester Council and other community providers to enhance such delivery. To ensure simplified understanding of how to contact and engage with this new Council and all service providers in an integrated way, this project will deliver the following:

- Ensure the delivery of consistent, accessible and efficient customer services by CEC.
- Establish, by Vesting Day, service standards at least matching those of current providers, with accelerating improvements from that point until mid 2011, to reach the Service Excellence Standard.
- Place the customer at the heart of the Council(s). Focussing on getting it right first time, meeting customer expectations and keeping the customer informed - resulting in a significant reduction in avoidable customer contact (National Performance Indicator NI14). Also embracing “Right Time” and “Right Benefit” National indicators for Housing Benefits.
- Ensure equality in service access.
- Promote, to the customers that are most likely to use them, the customer channels that are the most cost effective for the new Council.

7.5 **Stakeholder Analysis Workshop**

The Cheshire East LGR Transition Programme held their Stakeholder Analysis Workshop 8th August 2008. The purpose of the workshop was to identify and then state how the programme will effectively engage with the stakeholders.

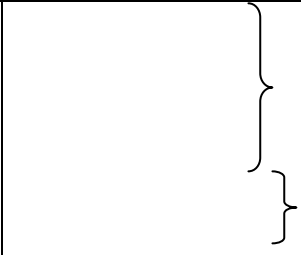

The workshop was facilitated by the Cheshire East LGR Transition Programme Manager and attended by CE Joint Implementation Team (JIT) & their Marketing and Communications Team. Feedback and findings have been used to for this Stakeholder Strategy.

Stakeholder Strategy Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Strategy Authors	Andrew Arditti, Lesley Seal, Philippa Desborough
Strategy Authorised by	Cabinet
Stakeholder Strategy	Overall responsibility – Philippa Desborough
Strategy Management	Management & Consultation – Named Relationship Managers
Strategy Communications	Instruction for Access and use issued by Marketing and Communication Team
Stakeholder Management	Named Relationship Managers
Key Stakeholder Events & Publications	Event co-ordination & organisation - named Relationship Managers Recording of details - Marketing and Communication Team

7.6 Breakdown of Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders / Stakeholder Issues	Area / s of interest	Relationship Manager	Key Engagement / Event
Media	Regisster of niche publications Stakeholder publications How to manage the Media	Whole programme (dependant on issue)	Communications Group	Regular briefing events Press Conference
Service Users	Residents Non-residents Council tax payers	Customer Access group	Strategic Directors	Communication via media and directly
Programme sponsors	Elected Members – shadow authority Elected Members - existing authorities Minority Backbenchers & Backbenchers Cabinet	Whole programme (dependant on issue)	SRO	Member's bulletins
Programme board	Existing chief executives	Safeguarding existing LAs' staff	SRO	Plan to control partnerships
Communities	Neighbourhood and community organisations Tenants associations Faith groups Special Needs groups Minority Groups Residents Schools/Governing bodies Local Businesses	Localities / Places Block "How will this affect me?"	Coun Dave Brown (Partnerships group) & Performance Lead	
Local Democracy	Parish and Town Councils MPs and MEPs		JIT Officer (2 nd tier P & C Officer) Chief Executive	Need clarity & formal strategy Annual T & P Council Conference
Ceremonial Corporate	Twinned authorities (this requires discussion) LGA		P & C Block & CEx	
Local Strategic	Registered Social landlords Health sector		Places	

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders / Stakeholder Issues	Area / s of interest	Relationship Manager	Key Engagement / Event
Partners	Police Service Fire Service Third Sector (CVS) Business sector (Chamber of Commerce) Adjoining authorities North West authorities Learning Skills Council Peak District national park		Strategic Directors Places	
Workforce	All staff in the new councils Teachers/ head teachers Trade unions	"How will this affect me?" JCPS	Chief Executive Strategic Directors	Teachers meetings Joining messages up
Contractors and suppliers	Businesses - local Business - national Voluntary Sector Public sector Independent sector Independent Nursing Homes		Transition & strategic directors / officers People Directorate	
General	Visitors Tourists Commuters		People Places Directorate	
Government and regulation	Government departments GONW Audit EU Regional agencies (inspectorates – e.g. OFSTED)		Chief Executive & Strategic Directors Places	Common Message Especially CAA

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders / Stakeholder Issues	Area / s of interest	Relationship Manager	Key Engagement / Event
Funding Bodies	NWRDA & 4NN EU related Government Housing (to be replaced by HACA) Other sources – as & when	}	Chief Executive	
			CLG, CEx	
Joined up Stakeholders	Stakeholder groups currently pan-Cheshire e.g. Children's Trust that will be split into CEC/CWAC entities.	Whole programme (dependant on issue)	Joined up approach from East & West	

7.7 Key External Stakeholder Communications Activities prior to 1 April 09

Audience	Timing	Communication activity/media & Key Messages	Action	Costs/ resource
Stakeholders/Partners	2 nd October 08	LGR Minister's Visit – stakeholder meeting with new CEx and Minister	CEC Corporate & CEC Comms	
Stakeholders/Partners	Autumn 08	Stakeholder workshop – meet CEx and Directors outline stakeholder involvement/engagement/shared objectives and structures. Suggested morning joint session, then afternoon split into 3 sessions (People, Places and P&C) with stakeholders attending most relevant session (although may be some duplicates/cross-over so may require multiple attendees of some Stakeholders)	CEC Comms	Transition budget?
Stakeholders/Partners	Spring 09 onwards	Consider stakeholder publication along lines of 'Cheshire Matters' produced by CCC.	CEC Comms CCC Comms	May be able to use existing CCC Comms budget and resources from Cheshire Matters
Stakeholders/Partners	April 09	Invite stakeholders to launch event at Westfields. Unveil all senior staff and key relationship managers with new structures. Could also launch new stakeholder groups that have been split into East from CCC structures e.g. Cheshire Assoc. of School Governors/Headteachers etc.	CEC Corporate & CEC Comms Relevant Blocks	

7.8 Consultations

A number of consultations are ongoing across Cheshire East such as the Transforming Learning Communities review of schools in Macclesfield, Sandbach, Alsager, Holms Chapel and Congleton. The view of the Shadow Authority will need to be incorporated into such consultations and this view communicated to stakeholders. As the successor authority Cheshire East has a key role in these undertakings.

8.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 8.1 The new Authority will need to develop effective relationships with key external stakeholders. The stakeholders identified in this report will have high expectations for the new Authority, we must be able to communicate innovative and fresh approaches to partnership and community working.

For further information:

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