ITEM No ...5.....

REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 4 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT ON: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2022-27 UPDATE

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 347-2023

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To give an update on progress during 2022-23 on the Council's Communication Strategy 2022-27 and associated action plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- a note the progress being made on the strategy; and
- b agree the 2023/24 action plan in Appendix 3.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 The current Dundee City Council corporate communication strategy was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 31 October, 2022 (Article IV of the minute, report 273-2022 refers). The main purpose of the strategy is to set out how the council communicates externally and internally, delivering on a vision to provide modern, multi-channel communications that support the strategic priorities of the council and its partners.
- 4.2 Effective communications are essential to achieving the ambitions set out in the Council Plan, and ensuring that people in Dundee and beyond have a clear understanding and appreciation of the council's operations, priorities and challenges.
- 4.3 The strategy is being delivered against the backdrop of an ever-changing communications landscape. Social media and digital channels are redefining the way people consume information, interact with large organisations and share opinions.
- 4.4 Whilst the strategy seeks to embrace and harness new channels for communicating, with a shift to "digital by default" communications in keeping with the Council's Digital Strategy, listening to feedback from communities means this must be supplemented by continuing to use more "traditional" inclusive channels to reach those who don't have ready digital access or skills.
- 4.5 It also supports the processes and partnerships required to deliver resilience communications like those required during Storm Babet and the funeral cortege event which followed the death of HM The Queen.
- 4.6 Appendix 1 is the annual report on the Strategy. It provides an update on the work carried out over the past year, including case studies. Key achievements over the past 12 months include:
 - a Continued rapid growth of our social media channels, increasing the audiences with which we communicate and engage. Across all social media channels the Council now has over 80,000 followers, a growth of 15% over the past year. An engagement measure for Facebook is also now in place and showing an average of over 21,000 engagements per month. New platforms such as TikTok have also been launched.
 - b Delivering extensive communications to support the successful staging of BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend in Dundee. These ranged from maximising opportunities to promote the city to a national audience to creating a suite of clear communications around travel and park

- access arrangements. The engagement with Dundee City Council event-specific social media included 255,000 Facebook views and 227,000 Twitter views.
- c Supporting the response and recovery phases of Storm Babet with a range of essential communications, from updates on weather warnings, road closures and service disruption to signposting sources of help for those affected by flooding and other storm damage. A dedicated page set up on the Council website was viewed over 25,000 times during the days of the storm.
- d Receiving praise from Audit Scotland in the Best Value Thematic Review for the work undertaken to communicate the Council Plan and its priorities to internal and external audiences.
- e Collaborating with neighbouring authorities on communications which impact on citizens across the wider region, including the Dundee Low Emission Zone, Big Weekend, Tay Cities Deal and a range of other partnerships.
- f Successfully executing a year-long programme of City Marketing activity. Put Dundee On Your Map exceeded expectations over the year, delivering over 88,000 engagements (an increase of 50% on the previous 12 months).
- g Running a specific campaign to raise awareness of the support available during the Cost of Living Crisis. The multi-channel campaign used radio, bus stop and social media adverts as well as posters and business cards. Effectiveness was measured through the usage of a dedicated web page (viewed over 31,000 times) and the volume of calls to the Council's helpline, as well as take-up of the other help offered.
- h Harnessing the "extranet" OneDundee On The Move which was launched as a tool to engage with employees working from home or without easy access to Council IT systems. The number of page views increased by 9% last year compared with the previous 12 months.
- i Launching innovative new signage on the Tay Road Bridge to help support people in crisis and also manage the flow of pedestrian and cycle traffic. The signage was developed following consultation with a range of stakeholders.
- 4.7 Appendix 2 is the action plan which underpins the strategy, with updates on delivery. A new action plan set out in Appendix 3, based on 2023-24 priorities, feedback from stakeholders and learnings from the work undertaken so far, will continue to drive our corporate Communication Strategy.
- 4.8 Activity over the coming year will focus on continued signposting of support for citizens struggling due to the cost of living crisis, preparation for the inclusive communications equality duty and delivering an ongoing calendar of effective City Marketing activity to support the Tourism and Culture sectors.
- 4.9 Other key goals for 2024 include developing the use of Office 365 for internal communications; streamlining design service commissioning for customers and building on the strong relationships with partners to amplify messaging and identify collaboration opportunities.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

GREGORY COLGAN DATE: 23rd November, 2023

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

STEVEN BELL DATE: 23rd November, 2023

SERVICE MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS

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2023 Update





From delivering statutory services to hosting a major music event, supporting people through the Cost of Living crisis to transforming and modernising for the future, people need to know what is happening, what it means for them and how they can engage.

The past 12 months have seen a continued focus on delivering impactful and inclusive communications, both in the way information is conveyed and in the channels used to reach more and more people.

The corporate communications team, and the wider Council, have embraced these changes in order to best support the delivery of the outcomes set out in the Council Plan and the Dundee Partnership's City Plan.

The outcomes are demonstrable, in financial and human terms. Effective communication has played a significant part in over 31,000 people locally accessing advice on the support available during the Cost of Living crisis last winter. It underpinned the recovery of the tourism sector after the Covid pandemic. And it allowed almost 1100 people to have their say in the annual Council budget consultation. Put simply, Council services and projects best deliver for the people of Dundee when communication is good.

The Council has developed strong partnerships - with neighbouring councils, other public

sector bodies and the business community to support wider initiatives and amplify our collective voice in line with Best Value.

A digital-first approach means that corporate channels showcasing services, disseminating information in impactful ways and providing immediate feedback now reach over 80,000 users – a two-thirds increase in three years. Supporting the Council's Digital Strategy, communications have played a part in the growth of online skills, encouraged the use of online services and extended access to information to members of the workforce who don't have day-to-day IT access.

But it's not all about digital. Working closely with the Fairness Commissioners, the Council has put inclusivity and accessibility at the heart of its communications in line with its shared vision of being a caring and fairer city.

The annual update reviews the progress made over the past 12 months, and sets out how good communication will continue to underpin the vital work the Council does.

continued focus on delivering impactful and inclusive communications

Social and Digital Media

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While the social media landscape has changed significantly over the past year, one thing remains constant – the growth of our online audience.

In the past 12 months alone, the number of users following Dundee City Council's corporate social media channels has increased by 15% to over 80,000.

That encouraging trend reflects the value that citizens give to the information and content being shared. Beyond bald numbers, it means increasing numbers of people the Council can inform and engage with.

The platform now known as X (formerly Twitter) continues to have the largest following, but a focus on diversification has led to strong growth across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, along with the successful creation of a TikTok account.

This cross-platform growth has been achieved by putting the most relevant content on each channel, engaging rather than broadcasting, and presenting

information visually wherever possible – for example through infographics or animated videos. Engagement is closely monitored to ensure that digital communications are effective. A measure for Facebook is now in place and showing an average of over 21,000 engagements per month.

Digital delivery can get important updates to citizens quickly and effectively. During the funeral cortege operation which followed the death of HM The Queen, vital information about the arrangements was viewed over 41,000 times in the space of two days.

More broadly, pages on the corporate website are seen around 400,000 times every month. Over the next year, work will be undertaken to help services ensure that their areas of the site are maintained and that the information shared with the public is as up-up-to-date as possible.



...reflects the value that citizens give to the information and content being shared.

Case study: BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend

The biggest event of its kind ever held in Dundee, BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend required a complex communications strategy targeting a wide range of audiences and key messages.

Working closely with colleagues in the BBC, national agencies and neighbouring local authorities, as well as the Council's project team, information about event safety, transport disruption, Camperdown Park closure and much more was disseminated.

Maps were created to inform road users and attendees alike about the arrangements in place, while videos and other content over the weekend created a buzz and made people aware of updated safety and transport measures.

A video showcasing Dundee was shown multiple times on the event's big screens, and dedicated web pages were set up to ensure that the city maximised the national spotlight shone on it.

The engagement with Dundee City Council event-specific social media included 255,000 Facebook views and 227,000 Twitter views. Media coverage was extensive, with millions of people watching on the BBC's live and catchup channels.

All of this helped contribute to a hugely successful event – subsequent evaluation showed that it was worth £3.7million to the local economy, while net satisfaction overall for festival-goers was recorded at 94%.

£3.7m

BBC RADIO

Marketing and Design



The demand from the Council and its partners for design services is ever increasing.

Services are becoming more and more aware that impactful communications materials, whether in print or digital form, bring better engagement from customers. This leads to improved outcomes, whether that be increased awareness, changes in behaviour or higher levels of service takeup.

Examples of this include the suite of materials, from recognisable branding to detailed maps, which helped communities and festival-goers understand the arrangements in place during Radio 1's Big Weekend.

Families of documents, such as the City and Council Plans and related strategy documents including this one, have a consistent design as well as easy-to-understand one-page summaries where appropriate.



That same consistency applies to major incidents such as Storm Babet, where the designs applied to social media posts allowed citizens to quickly recognise important updates in the mass of content filling their feeds.

Major marketing campaigns undertaken in the past 12 months have included a large-scale TV campaign raising awareness of the Low Emission Zone, promotion of garden waste permits and the latest phase of the Put Dundee On Your Map tourism-focused campaign. The latter delivered over 88,000 engagements during the year, an increase of 50% on the previous 12 months.

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The design team continues to evolve its skills to meet the changing demand, including an ever-greater focus on infographics and digital content. In keeping with the strategic goal of making communications more inclusive, designers have undergone training in accessible design.



Increased demand for design of documents means that a tiered approach is being implemented. Widely-consumed public-facing documents are given full design treatment, while internal and other publications are supported as appropriate with designs for covers, back pages and page footers.

That approach will continue to roll out over the next 12 months. Alongside that, an online commissioning form for design services will be implemented, streamlining the process for clients and allowing for more effective workload management and reporting

impactful communications materials... bring better engagement from customers

Case study: Macmillan Improving the Cancer Journey

The Dundee City Council communications team has supported the Macmillan Improving the Cancer Journey project since it was launched in Dundee in 2017.

That has included creating bespoke social media graphics, leaflets and high-profile animations telling the stories of people who had engaged with the service. All with the aim of raising awareness and signposting so people can be connected to supportive care.

Now, as the project rolls out to the rest of Tayside, the Council's design team has created an updated visual identity for it.

The existing animation material has been re-edited and repurposed to make it relevant to the wider geographic area the project will now serve.

New leaflets and customisable document templates have been created, and web pages developed for each of the three health and social care partnership areas within Tayside.

That work has been undertaken in close collaboration with the neighbouring authorities, IT colleagues, the project team and Macmillan, ensuring that all assets are effective and meet the charity's design standards.

Over the coming months, the team will continue to support the project as it expands and work with design colleagues to ensure consistency of materials as localised assets are created in Angus and Perth and Kinross.





Crisis communications



Communications are a statutory duty on local authorities and their partners in crisis situations, warning and informing the public to minimise impacts and support recovery.

By providing reassurance, giving advice and signposting to help, clear messaging can be an incredibly powerful tool at a time when people are in distress.

Good internal and stakeholder communications, meanwhile, can galvanise a response by giving people clarity on roles and mission, as well as encouragement and support. This requires both corporate communications and cascade updates from managers.

Recent years have seen a number of major events requiring extensive communications support, from the Covid-19 crisis to Storm Babet which wreaked havoc in the city in late 2023.

The Council's team works closely with services and partner agencies to ensure that accurate, consistent and compassionate communications are delivered to the public, elected members, our own workforce and other agencies.

Speed is often of the essence..

Her Majesty's Funeral Cortege
Advice to Mourners

Speed is often of the essence, and the Council is able to harness a range of digital channels including social media and the corporate website to quickly issue and update information.

This approach works well – pages set up to inform about HM The Queen's funeral cortege and Storm Babet (see case study) were clicked on tens of thousands of times in a matter of days.

And it's augmented by "on the ground" communications such as the briefing of volunteers and creation of leaflets or other hard copy materials.

Over the coming months, the Council's emergency communications plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect experience and learning from recent major incidents.



Case Study: Storm Babet

Storm Babet was one of the most damaging and distressing weather events to hit Dundee, and the wider east Scotland area, in recent years.

During the lead-up to the storm, the period of severe weather itself and the aftermath, there was a requirement for coordinated and compassionate communication to support the response and recovery operations.

Learning from previous major incidents, a web page was created to give citizens a single source of information including service disruption and road closures, the latest weather warnings and advice, and ways to get help and support.

Awareness of this resource was raised through social media. This proved an effective means of broadcasting updates, with over 25,000 page views over the space of around four days.

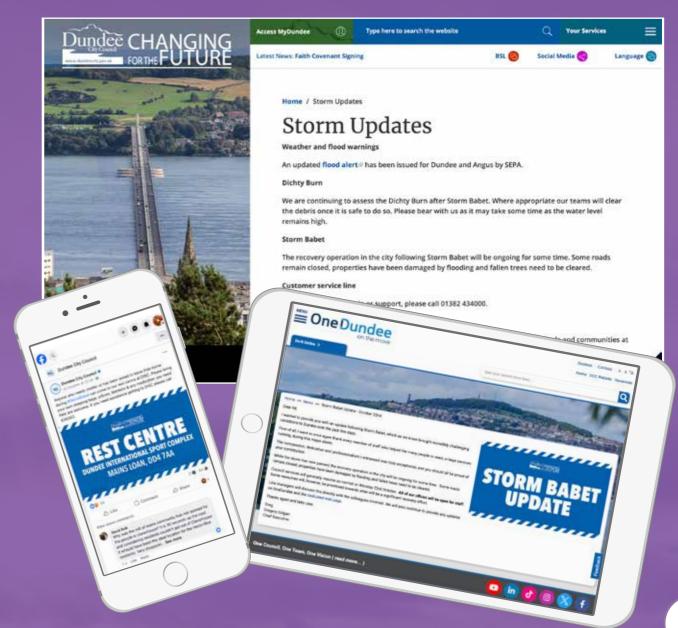
The page was updated regularly throughout the storm, signposting the creation of a rest centre, the reopening of individual roads due to flood damage, ongoing service disruption such as the partial closure of a school, and much more. It also ensured that citizens were constantly aware of the current weather warnings status and the related travel advice.

Alongside this, leaflets were created with more detailed information for people living in areas affected by flooding, which were distributed by staff on the ground. Media were also kept updated proactively and in response to inquiries.

As the storm passed, the online resources were further updated with links to sources of help for people whose properties had been damaged.

The communications team also provided regular updates for Council staff, from the latest information on building closures to messages of thanks from the Chief Executive.

Reflections and learning from Storm Babet will feed into the review of the emergency communications plan.





As the delivery of public services evolves to meet financial challenges and public expectations, so the need to work closely with partners increases.

The Council plays a key or leadership communications role in a number of critical projects, from the Tay Cities Deal to the Cost of Living crisis support, the Macmillan Improving the Cancer Journey project to BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend.

Often this is complex work, ensuring that the needs of all partners are met and that agreement is reached on proactive and reactive communications. A number of groups have been established to deliver this, including a pan-Tayside communications group and Tay Cities Region Deal communications group. In addition, the Council is an active member of the National Communications Group Scotland and the National Resilience Communications Group.

The communications team also works closely with NHS Tayside and the Third Sector in supporting the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership, including PR, design and committee support.

...used our collective channels to reach as large an audience as possible.

Through the Dundee Partnership, the Council has worked with other agencies to raise awareness of the City Plan objectives, and used their collective channels to reach as large an audience as possible.

This ever-expanding network of partnerships, within Dundee and beyond, has provided opportunities for the Council to collaborate on communications, share best practice and amplify messaging.

Collaborative work will continue in the months and years ahead to meet demand and resource challenges in the most efficient and effective ways possible.



Case study: Cost of Living

During the winter of 2022/23, agencies including the Council came together to co-ordinate support for people in the city who were struggling due to the Cost of Living crisis.

Communications was one of the key pillars of that work, alongside the Open Doors scheme, community food network, warm coats and blankets provision and advice services.

The aim of the communications group, led by the Council, was to raise awareness of the help offered as a result of the other pillars, while ensuring a consistent and inclusive approach.

It was therefore agreed that all partners would signpost people to a single page on the Council website which was updated regularly with the latest information, advice and sources of support.

Promotion was undertaken through social media, radio adverts, media engagement, bus and bus stop adverts, posters in Council and partner buildings, and the distribution of cards with contact information.

The approach was evaluated throughout, and demonstrated that the message was getting through to target audiences. The page has been viewed 31,500 times to date, while the telephone helpline promoted through the marketing activity was extremely busy with calls.

A renewed campaign to promote help and support during winter 2023/24 is now being launched.



SChor Channel

Engaging with our people

If the strategic priority of delivering a Modern Council is to be delivered, then effective two-way communication with employees will be essential.

Much progress has been made in recent years in opening up different channels of communication with the diverse group of around 6,500 people who make up the Council's workforce.

From the corporate centre, key information is now distributed through a monthly video blog from the chief executive, all staff emails and a regularly updated carousel on the OneDundee intranet.

Collespues. Scrober was quite a month, it of course trought storm ballet.

Access to the intranet has been opened up through the On The Move portal, which is viewed thousands of times by members of staff every month.

OneDundee will continue to be the central source of corporate news, policies and other key documents, and all employees are encouraged to visit it regularly.



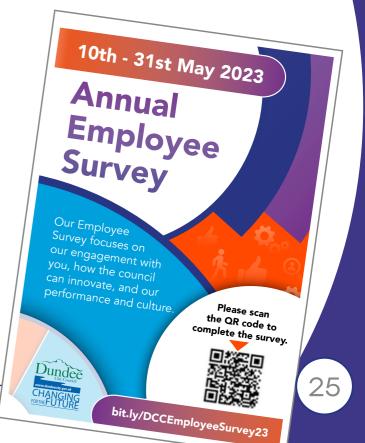
The focus over the past 12 months has been on augmenting internal communications through effective use of cascade by managers to their teams. This was identified through employee surveys, particularly during the pandemic, as being an area for development in some parts of the Council.

A session organised for Council leaders stressed the role they have to play in communicating with the workforce, ensuring that every member of staff is aware of the

corporate vision and priorities and the role they play. This type of communication also provides for dialogue and immediate feedback to be considered by senior leaders.

Service-level communication is also being developed through the use of mini-intranets, harnessing the power of the Microsoft 365 suite to easily create and manage these information portals.

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Case study: Council Plan

A multi-channel approach was adopted to ensure that employees across the Council, and the wider public, were aware of the Council plan and what its vision, values and priorities mean for them.

The Plan was launched and communicated in different ways to stakeholders. This included holding a leadership conference to make sure that senior employees were aware of the new priorities and could cascade these to their teams.



To follow this up, a video blog from the Chief Executive focused on the new Council Plan and the importance of designing a modern council that's fit for the challenges of the future.

Posters were displayed in staff areas of Council buildings. The posters were also distributed to community centres and libraries for display, and digital adverts were shown on bus stops and other public screens.

To coincide with the launch of the Plan on the Council's website, intranet and social media channels, engagement was undertaken with local print and broadcast media. A single-page summary document of the Council Plan 2022-27 was also made available.

The awareness-raising approach undertaken was praised in the Best Value Thematic Review of the Council, with Audit Scotland noting that "the Council had a good communication strategy for its plan."



"the Council had a good communication strategy for its plan"



OneDundee intranet page views every day



36,534 followers on Twitter 10%



80,843 social media followers

120,000

free ad plays on digital bus stop boards per month (approx)

media inquiries

COMMUNICATIONS

designs created per month



news releases issued



corporate 4,854,138 web site page views



88,000

engagements with Put Dundee On Your Map city marketing campaign





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