



HOUSING TASK GROUP (WHQS) – 12TH SEPTEMBER 2012

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To set out a comprehensive communication strategy and to establish a unique brand for WHQS.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 It is clear from the work already undertaken there is a continuing need for raising the profile of the Council's responsibility in achieving the WHQS by 2019 in the county borough particularly to key stakeholders: - Tenants, Councillors, Staff and Trade Unions. It is also important to ensure the wider public audience understand the impact of delivering improved housing across the county borough.
- 2.2 Communications has a key role to play in delivering this transformational programme and therefore the strategy is designed to cover the first three-year period with annual monitoring and evaluation of its achievements. It will also set in place the requirements for developing a clear brand identity together with an action plan for the implementation of the whole strategy.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Project Board in defining their vision in the offer document "Your Choice, Your Home" has advised this should be used to underpin the communication strategy and for it to embrace the principles of sustainable development, equality of opportunity, effective partnership and consultation.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The communication strategy aims to ensure the general public and professionals, partner organisations and the aforementioned key stakeholders are informed and engaged in the process of the programme through a comprehensive communications action plan.
- 4.2 In order to raise the public's perception of the work of the WHQS programme as set out in the offer document it is recommended for a brand to be developed which will enable those involved to share the sense of common purpose under one banner. The brand used to launch the Ballot "Your Choice, Your Home" is a very recognisable brand amongst the constituent audience and can be used as a foundation for developing the future housing service brand.

4.3 Key Outcomes

The purpose of the communications strategy is to raise awareness of the WHQS programme of work and in particular its annual action plan through external and internal communication activities. This will also reflect the broader housing service communication activities as stakeholders should not be asked to discern between the variable delivery structures.

- To develop a communications action plan, which is simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.
- To alert and engage key stakeholders to the timetable and targets involved in achieving the WHQS Programme goals and their role in contributing to the process.
- To create a sense of common purpose with residents and professionals in this activity and they feel the benefit within their own living/working environment.

4.4 The prime audience in the early stages of this scheme are the professional officers who through an extensive engagement process feel comfortable and understand the programme to improve Council homes in the county borough. Once they have this tangible understanding of this commitment to the programme, employees will be able to support and enhance the second step of engaging with remaining key stakeholders.

Key Stakeholders:

- Tenants
- Members
- Employees
- Trade Unions

Stakeholders:

- AM/MPs
- Professional Associates
- Contractors

Initial Activities:

- Identify examples of good practices/service delivery, which are already meeting the WHQS standards.
- Set out the timetable for procurement of new contracts
- The set up of the Housing Task Group will help publicise the work of the Council in delivering WHQS programme
- Setting out of the potential impact of the expenditure on local jobs

4.5 The Council has seconded its corporate Communication and Public Engagement Manager for three years to provide the development and implementation of the strategic communications plan. The corporate communications team will be key in supporting this work.

4.6 The communications action plan has identified the following key areas of work: -

Engagement

- Employee Engagement Activities
- Tenant Engagement Activities
 - Working closely with Participation Officers

- Contractor Engagement
 - Linked to the broader procurement marketing plan
- Wider government representatives engagement

Brand and Information

- Development of a brand and guidelines for use
- WHQS Internet and Intranet content
 - Including FAQ, key contacts, programme information.
- Appropriate information brochures for use with tenants
- Marketing materials for procurement process with suppliers

Media Activity

- Flagship profile
 - Key Milestones
 - Key Messages
 - Your home, our promise.
 - We're listening to you.
 - Your home means jobs, security and success.
 - Your home is creating real jobs
 - £200 million will be spent on improving your homes
 - Quality and modernisation
 - Investing in homes and communities
- Community Impact
- Tenant experience
- Positive progress
- Dealing with adverse media issues
- Development of bespoke social media stream

See Appendix 1 for Communication delivery techniques.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's EqIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Project Board will manage the resource requirements for delivering the communications, within the programme budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has no direct personnel implications. The WHQS Programme Structure has required senior management changes and the development of a WHQS Delivery Team, which is in the process of being established.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Comments received from consultees have been incorporated within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The report is for information.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To advise the Housing Task Group on the WHQS and the arrangements the Council has made for taking the WHQS Programme forward to meet the commitments given to tenants.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub-Committee function.

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Consultees: Cllr Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Nigel Barnett, Deputy Chief Executive
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Nicole Scammell, Head of Corporate Finance
Dan Perkins, Head of Legal Services
Gareth Hardacre, Head of Management & People Development

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Communication Techniques