

# Communications Strategy



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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1. Following the outcome of the Housing Stock Transfer Ballot, the programme, to achieve Welsh Housing Quality Standard, is now a major flagship programme for the Council involving a budget spend of circa £200million between 2012 and 2020 and in excess of £800 m over the life of the 30 year business plan. The delivery of the programme is a significant challenge and presents an opportunity to accomplish some key housing and regeneration outcomes.
- 1.2. The transformation of our housing estates is one of the eight activity themes in the Council's Regeneration Strategy "People, Business, Places". This transformation agenda requires major investment in developing excellent communications. Our communications will focus on changing the culture of the organisation and using the five rules of Reputation:- Value for money, informing and engaging, trust and confidence, service delivery and improving lives to bring about an efficient and effective transformation of the service.
- 1.3. This strategy designed to cover the first three-year period with annual monitoring and evaluation of its achievements. Brand development and the guidance for using the brand with an overarching action plan for the implementation of the whole strategy are key to delivery of this strategy.
- 1.4. Key stakeholders:- Tenants, Councillors, Staff and Trade Unions will be involved in delivery of the communications. This strategy will also ensure the wider public audience understand the concept and impact of delivering improved housing across the county borough.
- 1.5. The biggest change facing the service is to move, from viewing council properties as commodities of the authority, to viewing and valuing them as homes of the people who reside in them, and ultimately to a more customer centric service.
- 1.6. There has already been a tremendous amount of good work achieved to date putting the tenant at the heart of the service through the original offer document and this communication strategy seeks to build on this work.

## 2. Culture and Reputation

2.1. It is clear in order to transform council homes lives and communities the organisation, Housing Service needs to change its culture and develop a reputation which is valued by all stakeholders.

2.2. In particular there is the need to create a staff group who will act as the ambassadors of the communication strategy objectives. Their engagement will be critical to the success of this strategy.

2.3. A recent survey showed:-

- Council staff are less likely to speak well of the organisation than private sector employees – with only one in three likely to speak up for the council and sell its work externally
- Councils that perform most effectively are most likely to have staff who would speak up for their council externally
- Councils that keep their staff well informed are rewarded with more motivated staff.

2.4. Similarly the relationship with tenants will play a key part of building trust and mutual respect. They have developed their own simple acronym to anchor the foundations of the relationship between those who deliver the service and themselves.

### What Customers Can Expect

**R**espect  
**E**nthusiastic  
**S**atisfaction  
**P**ride  
**E**xcellence  
**C**ommunication  
**T**rust

### What Service Providers Can Expect

**R**espect  
**E**nterance  
**S**atisfaction  
**P**ride  
**E**mployment  
**C**ommunication  
**T**rust

2.5. In applying the same principle the employees, their managers and the senior managers can also harness some simple engagement principles

### Employee

**A**ssess  
**C**ommunicate  
**T**ake Action

### Manager

**C**oach  
**A**lign  
**R**ecognise  
**E**ngage

### Senior Management

**L**ocalise  
**E**nthusiasm  
**A**uthentic  
**D**ifference

2.6. The employee must be responsible for their own actions and recognise this influences how others will invest in our reputation.

- 2.7. The employees direct line managers are responsible for ensuring their teams recognise their role in the delivery of the service. They must coach and align the workforce to meet the productivity required and in doing so recognise and highlight /reward excellence. The managers' role is to engage with employees and feedback to senior managers.
- 2.8. Senior managers are responsible for creating a distinct sense of localised community within the workforce. They must ensure their communication is genuine, open and honest. Their role is also to ensure the wider audience recognises the significance of the work being carried out and its impact on the well being of the county borough. The edge senior managers can bring to the relationship is the enthusiasm for the business goals and the energy and excitement when these goals are successfully achieved.
- 2.9. The purpose of this strategy is about creating a communication environment, which embraces the workforce, the tenants, the public, all of the council and our partner organisation (incl. contractors).
- 2.10. The strategy has a responsibility to develop a positive culture and an excellent reputation for the work we carry out in our communities. It must ensure the work of the housing service is valued and trusted, it must also build confidence in what we aim to achieve and finally it must ensure we have a positive impact on the lives of people we work with.

### 3. Key Objectives

- 3.1. There are identifiable key stakeholders and they must be alert to the timetable and targets involved in achieving our goals and the strategy must engage with them to develop their role to contribute to the outcomes.
- 3.2. The strategy identifies two Key Objectives

**Objective 1:** To provide the best standards of customer care and support for people using our Caerphilly Homes services

Operational objectives	Communications objectives
To train and develop our staff effectively to work with our customers	To ensure all staff know and understand the standards of customer care expected
To develop effective engagement with people living in properties own by the council	To ensure our customers know the quality of services they should expect, and know what is expected of them
To provide opportunities for customers to influence our service objectives and processes	To ensure our customers have opportunities to communicate their needs within the organisation
	To regularly gather feedback to ensure we are maintaining standards of care and support

**Objective 2:** To play a key role in the community as a valued provider of services for the people of Caerphilly County Borough

<b>Operational objectives</b>	<b>Communications objectives</b>
To build strong relationships with our partners	To provide a regular flow of information to key stakeholders
To provide opportunities to create local jobs	To publicise all procurement opportunities and promotion of training opportunities
To provide evidence of the transformation of council homes, lives and communities	To regularly showcase successes in the local media

## 4. Audience

4.1. The audiences are split into two groups. The Key Stakeholders group is where our primary communication will be focused and the Stakeholder group also has a specific communication action. There are of course further groups who will be in receipt of the organisations communications as the work develops over the coming months and years.

### **Key Stakeholders**

Employees  
Members  
Tenants  
Trade Unions

### **Stakeholders**

AM/MPs  
Contractors  
Professional Associates  
Partner Organisations

## 5. Key Messages

5.1. It is important to establish key messages which are recognised by the internal audience as well as the external. The internal audience need to have their own distinct core messages and work together to build with their managers their understanding of what these mean to them.

5.2. The two key messages for the internal audiences are based around the values of the service and in the early stages of this strategy the Staff Ambassador group will work on developing phrases which help the employees understand the meaning.

**We try to make a positive difference to people's lives**

**In work we treat people how we want to be treated**

5.3. For the external audience we need to recognise the investment which will be used to transform our council homes across the county borough. The link to the offer document is important and these messages must be about people, business and places reflecting the regeneration aspect of such a multi million investment as a key element.

5.4. Initial messages are:

- Your home, our promise

- We're listening to you
- Transforming council homes, lives and communities
- Your home means real jobs, security and success
- £200 million to be spent on improving homes, lives and communities

## 6. Brand

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- 6.1. A Brand is a collectively held idea of a company or organisation by its customers, in reaction to the messages the company sends via interaction, advertising, product design and public relations. The purpose of a brand is it defines the relationship our customers have with us. A brand is a promise we make to our customers - and to ourselves and finally a brand is shaped by each experience customers have with us.
- 6.2. The need to present a new fresh look to the service will help us build the new reputation this strategy has set out. We want our customers and stakeholders to invest in our brand and be a part of our success.
- 6.3. The development of the brand has been rapid due to the pressure of the timetable of the massive procurement agenda. We want to ensure the simplicity of the brand allows flexibility for it to mature with the timespan of the transformation programme of investment .
- 6.4. The requirement to change from housing to homes has been led in particular by the tenants representatives. Their wish for their homes to be recognised beyond a landlord commodity. The positive nature of the investment and the fresh impetus to put people at the heart of the service also influenced the brand design.
- 6.5. The base image is presented below.



## 7. Evaluation & Review

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7.1. It is crucial this strategy remains effective and responsive. Therefore, it is recommended that the council carry out regular reviews at six monthly intervals using September 2012 as its start point. We will use quantitative and qualitative measures such as those set out below, and will be measured against the agreed outcomes for this strategy. This will inform any necessary adaptations over time.

7.2. Sample measureables:

- Staff satisfaction surveys and feedback from specific focus groups
- Feedback from members, including from Scrutiny panels etc
- Number of visitors to the programme's internet pages and online forums
- Attendance at Caerphilly Homes events
- Number of articles published in local media
- Volume and tone of local and national media coverage
- Analysis of online social media channels.