

We will deliver the aims of the Communications Policy (September 2008) through a number of communications tools. These will form the basis of the action plan.

### 1. Carlisle Focus

Carlisle Focus is the City Council's quarterly resident's magazine published every Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter and includes information about City Council services, local events and partnership initiatives. Every edition also includes a local events listing, council meeting dates, city councillor contact details and Customer Contact Centre opening times and contact details.

All the information provided is tied in with the City Council's priorities, Carlisle Renaissance, Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Learning City. We also take into account the Reputation Campaign core actions and relevant performance indicators so that our residents receive appropriate and timely information about our services.

It has a print run of 58,500 and more than 54,000 are delivered to every home and business in the Carlisle district using Royal Mail Door to Door service. 6,000 copies are made available in public buildings, including community centres and other locations such as newsagents and post offices. Electronic copies are available on the City Council's website.

The magazine has consistently been shortlisted for and has achieved several national awards over the last three years:

- North West Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) PRIDE Awards 2007 – Silver Award - Best Newspaper or Magazine
- British Association of Communicators in Business, Northern Region Awards 2007 - Certificate of Merit
- North West Chartered Institute of Public Relations PRIDE Awards 2006 – Finalist – Newsletter, newspaper or magazine
- CIPR Local Government Group – Excellence in Communications Awards – 2005 – Best Civic Magazine or newspaper (circulation less than 60,000)
- PR Week Awards 2004 – Corporate Publications

These awards provide a benchmark to gauge best practice against similar magazines around the country.

Evaluation of the magazine is conducted through the annual reader's survey which appears in the Autumn edition. In 2007, 86% of residents who took part in the survey said Carlisle Focus was their preferred method of receiving information from the City Council, 82% found it interesting, 69% easy to read, 65% informative and 57% useful.

This information has been used to help us to deliver better services and to continually improve the magazine.

## **2. Media**

The media has a key role in promoting our services, events, meetings, decisions and policies. With this in mind, we issue approximately 300 proactive press releases each year. We also issue statements in response to press enquiries and arrange interviews following up a press release or as a comment from the City Council.

In our 2007 readers' survey, 74% of our residents said they got most of their information about the City Council from Carlisle Focus, 48% from the Cumberland News, 24% from News and Star, 26% from local TV and 14% from local radio.

The media is a useful communications tool to get messages to residents in a quick and timely manner and Carlisle is fortunate that within the city, there is a daily newspaper and BBC Radio station.

## **3. Corporate Marketing Campaigns**

Marketing is a key area for proactive and positive communications that can help to build up a bank of goodwill with residents and other stakeholders. It can help the public to make the best use of our services as well as educate and inform residents about new legislation and initiatives.

Marketing campaigns are used to enhance the reputation of individual services. They can also help to change behaviours and perceptions using a variety of visual and information tools such as press advertising, posters, lamp post banners, bus advertising, postcards, vehicle signage and the website.

Any corporate marketing campaign will always be integrated with media and internal communications to ensure that key messages are channelled to all our stakeholders.

A successful campaign to highlight the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, 'Carlisle is...' was recognised nationally, winning North West Chartered Institute of Public Relations PRIDE Gold Award, Corporate Communications Category.

## **4. Branding**

Carlisle City Council's brand identity is about more than just the design of its logo; it is about how that logo is applied to create an overall, positive identity that generates confidence in the organisation and contributes to a good reputation.

Our brand is one of the most visible ways in which the organisation is perceived and therefore judged, and if applied effectively and consistently, it

will establish a positive, coherent perception of the City Council for all our stakeholders, including our employees.

A crucial requirement for implementing the Reputation project is to ensure that the Carlisle City Council brand is consistently linked to our services. This especially includes areas where the Council performs very well and where success should be celebrated; Talkin Tarn, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery and any awards such as green flags for our parks and open spaces.

#### **4.1 Promoting Carlisle**

Growing Carlisle – our Economic Strategy<sup>1</sup> recognises the need to ensure that Carlisle has a positive public image and that the opportunities arising from growth are communicated effectively to prospective investors, businesses, new residents and students through a sustained campaign. Just as importantly, the people of Carlisle need to believe in the City's future and what it could aspire to become.

A credible, imaginative and persuasive local brand that has local roots and is 'owned' by local stakeholders needs to be developed. An attractive image must be created that captures both Carlisle's current appeal and its potential, developed to encapsulate a dynamic 'feel good factor' and to reflect the quality of life enjoyed in the Carlisle area.

A need has also been recognised that there should be a compelling tourism consumer brand and comprehensive marketing strategy to promote Carlisle as a good quality visitor experience to ensure that it is a successful destination.

### **5. Internal Communications**

Communication is a powerful tool that can be used to develop the culture and values of an organisation. Effective internal communication helps to develop a more transparent culture where employees and Members feel valued and are able to contribute to achieving the Council's priorities. It helps to increase awareness and understanding of Council business, improves morale, motivation and ultimately, performance.

Through our Internal Communications Strategy (April 2007, incorporated within the Communications Policy, September 2008) we are committed to providing effective, internal communications which will enable employees and Members to fulfil their roles and ensure that we are working together towards the same goals.

### **6. Carlisle City Council website and intranet**

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<sup>1</sup> Page 31 Growing Carlisle – The Economic Strategy for Carlisle City Region, <http://cmis.carlisle.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/MeetingDocuments.aspx?meetingID=102>

Our website is a key communication tool that provides information which can be accessed all year round at any time. Visitors to the website can access any information about Carlisle City Council such as news, events, refuse collections and recycling, council tax and details of local Councillors. Online transactions are also possible including council tax payments, planning applications, registering to vote and reporting abandoned vehicles or graffiti.

During 2007, the website generated 1,127,718 page views from local, national and international visitors to the site, an increase of 50% on the 2006 figure.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the ways in which we use our website as a communications marketing tool. Through web-reports, a web focus group, web-user feedback forms and the annual reader's [Focus] survey, we can monitor its effectiveness and user-friendliness. It is also helpful in gathering equality and diversity monitoring information that helps us to identify the groups which are and are not accessing our services.

There is a need to develop the Council's internal communications infrastructure so that it is better able to deliver our communication needs. The intranet is an important internal communications tool which could help employees and Members to access current information about teams and services. It offers opportunity for views to be expressed, to seek advice and to comment on issues and concerns. It is the main source for City Council documents and policies.

## **7. Corporate Publications**

Corporate publications contain information that appeals to a wide and varied audience. They can set out our aims, priorities and targets, or explain how council tax is spent, or provide useful contact numbers. These documents all carry important information about the City Council which needs to be communicated in such a way that all readers can read and understand the content.

Corporate publications such as A-Z of Services, the Community Plan for Carlisle, the Corporate Improvement Plan and the Annual Report, are produced through the Communications Team so that these documents are clearly recognisable as being part of a set of Corporate Communications. The design is clear and the layout simple which means the reader is more likely to be able to understand the information. These documents are also checked to see that they are written in Plain English using everyday language and are jargon free.

The City Council must ensure that all information materials, including corporate publications, are accessible. We also take into account environmentally friendly production methods.

## **8. Consultation and Community Engagement**

Increasing community engagement lies at the heart of the local government agenda. The various White Papers and Local Government Public Involvement with Health Act, 2007, seek to create “empowered communities ... and deliver devolution right to the doorstep”.

Consultation is a key element in building this level of engagement, and together with effective communication and participatory opportunities, forms the basis of successful empowerment. There are pilot projects underway in Harraby and in Longtown that will help us to determine how local service providers can promote more empowered local communities.

The City Council first published a Corporate Consultation Policy in February 2006. This was reviewed alongside the Communications Policy, 2007 to reflect the increasing emphasis on consultation and community engagement.

## **9. Accessibility and Equalities**

The City Council's Equality and Diversity policy (2006) states that we will “...Identify, remove and overcome barriers to communication and provide clear and understandable information, including employment application forms, in a variety of formats.”

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) gives the public a legal right of access to ‘recorded’ information held by the Council in any form. The City Council also has the responsibility to make sure all printed and written materials are available in alternative formats so that the information and services are accessible to all.

All City Council materials and publications must be offered in alternative languages to English as covered by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The implementation of Section 21 of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) means that the City Council also needs to provide materials in formats different from standard print, so that everyone is able to access Council information and services. The DDA states that you must take ‘reasonable’ steps to make services and information accessible.

To ensure equality of opportunity and value for money, it is essential to communicate effectively with all audiences. Investigating different communication channels and formats can help with this. We must continuously ask our audiences **how** they want to receive information about the City Council.