

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to	Executive Meeting
Date	10 December 2012
Subject	Communications Strategy 2012-15
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr W J Chorlton
Lead Officer(s)	Head of Service - Policy
Contact Officer	Public Relations Officer 01248 752128
Nature and reason for reporting	
To submit draft Strategy for approval and consider observations from Corporate Scrutiny Committee	

A – Introduction / Background / Issues
<p>1.1 The draft Strategy has been prepared in order to provide a strategic framework for the Authority in relation to Communications and aims to ensure that stakeholders have a clear understanding of the Council’s priorities, access to services and engagement with the Council. A copy of the draft Strategy is enclosed Appendix I.</p> <p>1.2 The Strategy has an important role to promote the Council’s reputation in general and outlines the roles of Elected Members and Staff. Also included as an appendix to this strategy is a media protocol to assist Members and Staff. The Strategic Leadership Team has already endorsed the Strategy.</p> <p>1.3 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised the draft Strategy at its meeting on 26th November 2012. The Committees observations are included in Appendix II</p>
B - Considerations

C – Implications and Impacts		
1	Finance / Section 151	
2	Legal / Monitoring Officer	
3	Human Resources	
4	Property Services (see notes – separate document)	
5	Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	
6	Equality (see notes – separate document)	
7	Anti-poverty and Social (see notes – separate document)	
8	Communication (see notes – separate document)	
9	Consultation (see notes – separate document)	
10	Economic	
11	Environmental (see notes – separate document)	
12	Crime and Disorder (see notes – separate document)	
13	Outcome Agreements	

CH - Summary**D - Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to:

1. Consider the observations of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 26.11.12.
2. Subject to 1 above to approve the Communications Strategy.

Huw Jones
Head of Service - Policy
26.11.12

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Corporate Communication Strategy
Appendix 2 - Observations of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Background papers

Corporate Communications Strategy 2012-15

Front page to include keywords from Residents' Survey conclusions here:

LISTENING TO CITIZENS

DELIVERING ON PROMISES

IMPROVING

INFORMING

DRAFT

CONTENTS

	Page
Context	3
Introduction	4
Aims & objectives of the Corporate Communications Strategy	7
Key messages	8
Target Audiences	9
Communication Tools	10
Reputation Management	12
Strategy	13
Resources	14
Evaluation	18
Appendices:	
Media Protocol	19

DRAFT

CONTEXT

Where are we?



by Richard Parry Jones, Chief Executive

Welcome to the Isle of Anglesey County Council's Corporate Communications Strategy, which sees us setting our sights firmly on the future.

Through our corporate communications, we hope to show you how we're working towards achieving five key outcomes for Anglesey:

We want an Anglesey...

- which has a thriving and prosperous economy
- where people achieve their potential
- where people are healthy and safe
- where people enjoy, protect and enhance their built and natural environment for future generations
- where people are proud of their council

Following a turbulent period, Anglesey now needs to focus all its energy on **driving forward a sustainable, radical change in key services areas** such as education and social services, both to satisfy the regulators and offer the best value for money for citizens.

Addressing the major issues of **significant service redesign and improvement, driving economic development and increasing community engagement** is essential if we are to forge ahead and create a council we can all be proud of.

We must push forward with the transformation agenda and create services fit for 21st century life.

That has to be driven by innovative thinking at every level, whether that's in education, in social care or in any other of the many services the council provides.

Whilst our primary responsibility remains to support the most vulnerable in society, we strongly believe that economic growth and social wellbeing are far from being mutually exclusive. In fact, increased economic activity, being innovative and developing an enterprising culture on the island will drive the creation of new jobs, retain talent on the island and help improve the quality of life here on Anglesey.

We need to ensure that residents are first in line to access opportunities, and communicating effectively both internally and externally is all part of making that possible.

Richard Parry Jones

INTRODUCTION

Why have a Corporate Communications Strategy?

- The Isle of Anglesey County Council has a duty to prove to residents and partners how it is delivering services and providing good value for money.
- The Corporate Communications Strategy plays an important role in demonstrating how the Council will inform the public, staff and other key stakeholders and community partners of the key outcomes the Council are trying to achieve for Anglesey, how it is working to achieve them and how they can be involved.
- The Corporate Communications Strategy also has an important role in demonstrating how we will signpost the public to important and/or useful information about services.
- UK-wide local government research has shown that the better informed and engaged residents are, the more satisfied they are and the more likely they are to believe the council offers value for money.¹
- Consequently, good communications can give the council a better reputation amongst residents and build strong relationships with local partners.
- This Corporate Communications Strategy sets out how the Council will use communications as a strategic tool to achieve greater trust, confidence and engagement amongst the public, council staff and key partners.

The most commonly consulted sources of information about Council services include newsletters/magazines/leaflets from Council services, the website, Welsh local newspapers and word of mouth

Anglesey Residents' Survey 2012

Just over four in five respondents stated that 'Listening to citizens and deliver on our promises' is an important priority for Anglesey.

Anglesey Residents' Survey 2012

¹ LGinsight poll, June 2011

Where does the Corporate Communications Strategy sit?

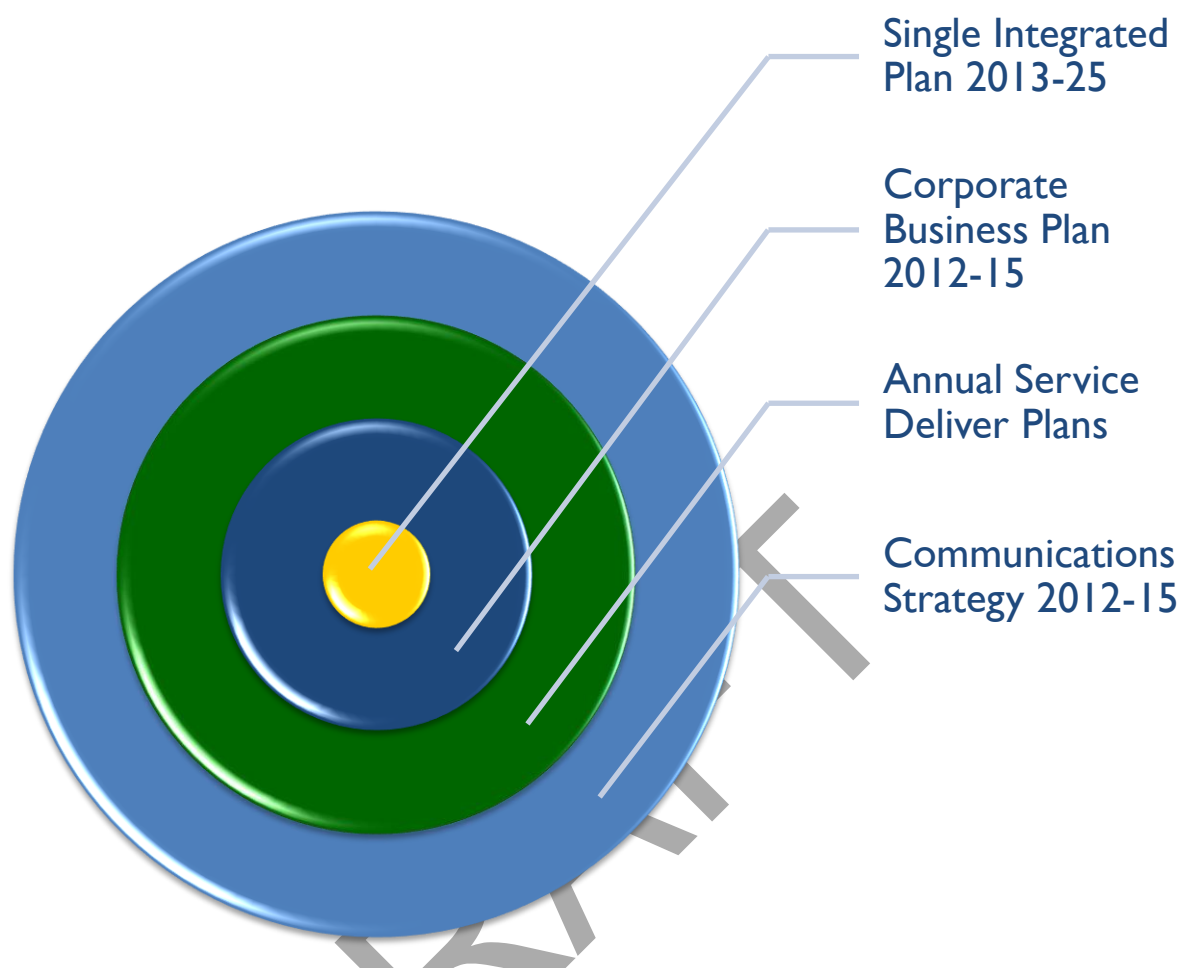


FIG 1. Where the Corporate Communications Strategy fits with other IoACC strategic plans

The **Single Integrated Plan 2013-25** is at the heart of the Council’s strategic thinking, as it sets out the long term vision for improving the economic, environmental and social well-being of Anglesey. The three-year **Corporate Business Plan**, which is updated annually, informs medium-term decision-making at every level whilst **Service Delivery Plans** set out forward work programmes for the coming year. The **Corporate Communications Strategy** embraces all three levels of strategic thinking, and sets out how we will communicate the work being done by the council on all three levels.

What are you telling us?

The Anglesey Residents' Survey 2012 was a great way for us to find out what residents thought of the Council.

Over three quarters of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their access to services, while only one in twelve were dissatisfied.

Four in five respondents were satisfied with household recycling collection, two-thirds with keeping public land clear of litter and refuse, almost two-thirds with the parks and open spaces including Country Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Three in five are satisfied with cultural services such as Oriel Ynys Môn and other museums and **58%** with local transport information and services.

Half of survey respondents were satisfied with sports and leisure facilities, with a quarter dissatisfied. **48%** were satisfied with the upkeep of road maintenance, with three in ten dissatisfied.

Three in five survey respondents felt informed about the services provided by the Council, while under a quarter felt uninformed. Older survey respondents were more likely to feel informed about services provided by the Council.

Over half of respondents found it easy to get hold of someone in the Council last time they got in touch, whilst one in six found it hard (16%).

Almost **two thirds** of respondents felt they are happy with the Council's Welsh language provision face-to-face, by telephone and on a written basis.



AIM

What is this strategy trying to do?

The aim of all corporate communication activity is to ensure that staff, stakeholders, partners, residents and anyone else who deals with the council has **a clear and positive understanding** of:

- **what the Isle of Anglesey County Council is trying to achieve for the people of Anglesey**
- **what our values are**
- **how we are making progress and providing value for money**
- **how individuals can access services provided by the Council**
- **how we are listening and how they can become more engaged with their Council**

This strategy sets out our approach to corporate communications and what tools we will use to communicate with staff, citizens, partners and communities.

How are we going to achieve our aim?

By:

- increasing citizen and community engagement and improving access to services
- being proactive in our relationship with the media
- strengthening the use of the Council brand to raise awareness of services
- improving internal communications

KEY MESSAGES

What are we trying to say?

Our key messages reflect the newly-adopted strategic outcomes of the Council. These should be reflected in corporate communications:

- We want Anglesey to have a thriving and prosperous rural economy
- We want the people of Anglesey achieve their full potential
- We want the people of Anglesey to be healthy and safe
- We want the people of Anglesey to enjoy, protect and enhance their built and natural environment for future generations
- We want the people of Anglesey to be proud of their Council

Most important actions in ensuring the people of Anglesey are proud of their Council:

“More democracy, honesty, accountability and transparency in the Council”

“More engagement with residents and listening to residents”

Anglesey Residents’ Survey 2012



TARGET AUDIENCES

Who are we talking to?

The Council communicates with a wide variety of people, from staff to elected members, local partners to residents. Each of these partners will have different levels of awareness of the Council's work, and key messages will need to be tailored accordingly. Likewise, when planning individual campaigns, attention needs to be given to the profile of the target audience. For example, the most effective way of reaching older age groups may be the traditional media, but social media is essential in reaching younger people.

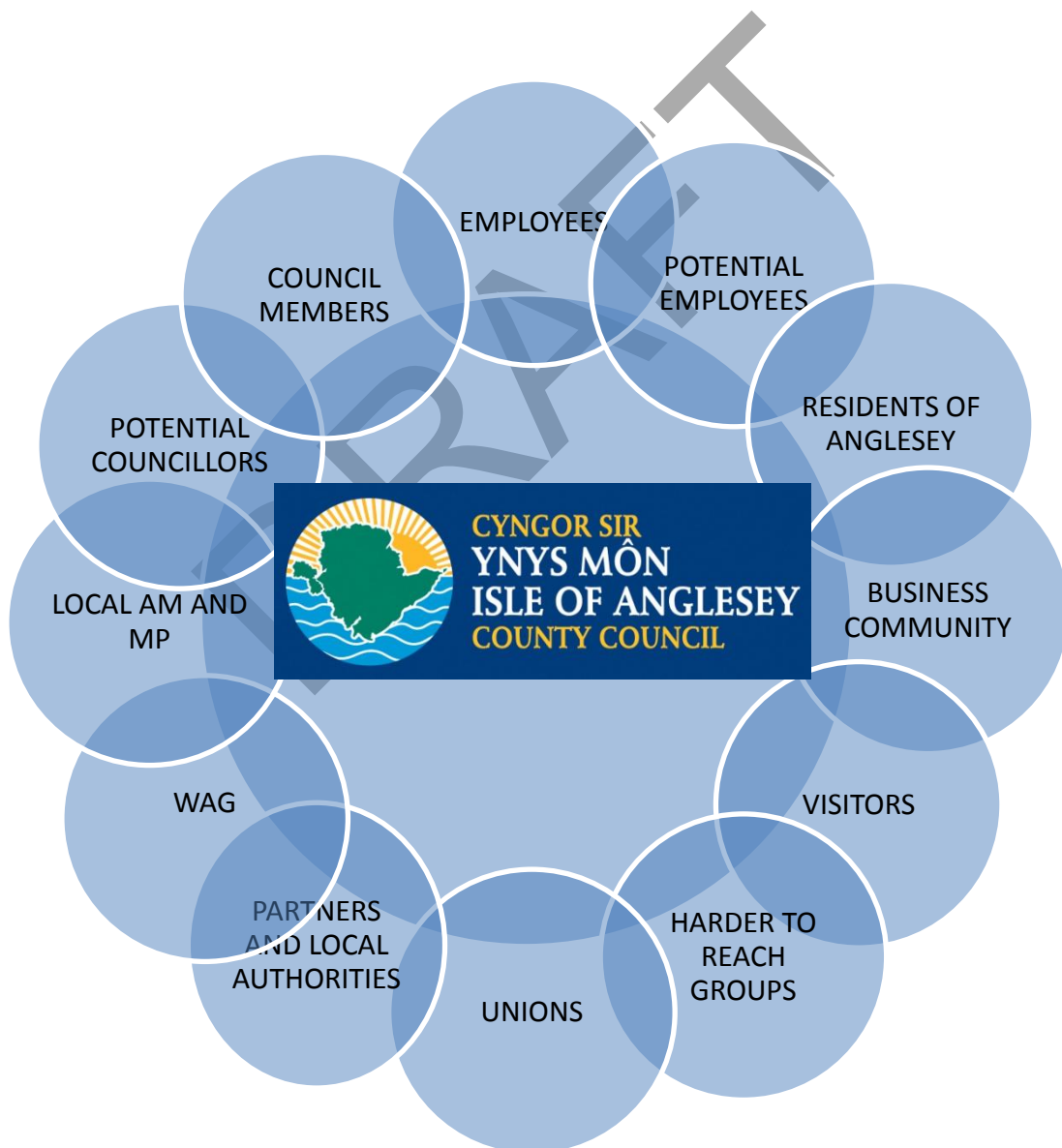


FIG 2. Target Audiences

Communication Tools

How do we communicate?

B B C

DAILY POST

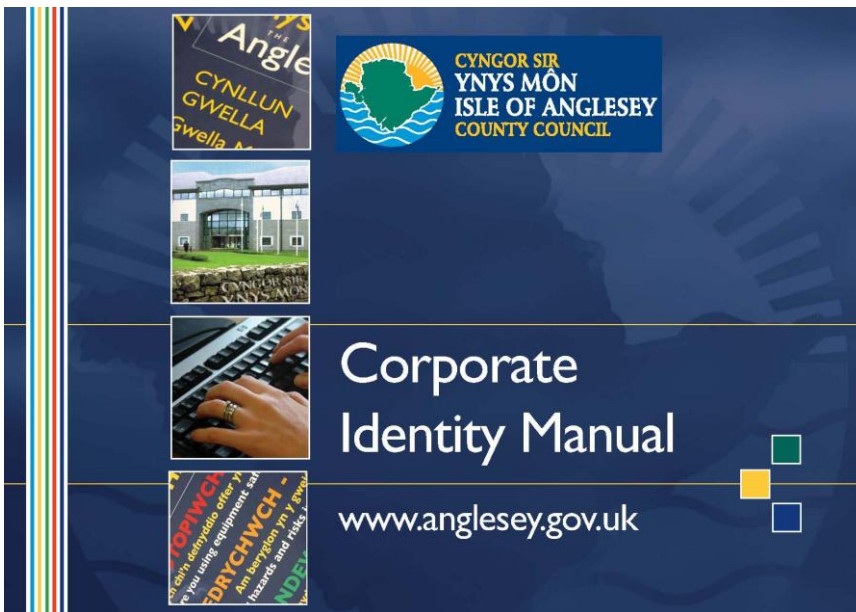
North Wales CHRONICLE
THE MJ **LGO**
local government chronicle

HOLYHEAD ANGLESEY MAIL



FIG 3. Communication Tools

CORPORATE IMAGE



The corporate image says a lot about the organisation and the way we do things. A strong corporate image can make a good impression with the public and partners.

It is important, therefore, that the Council maintains a strong corporate identity on all internal and external documents and materials. This makes it easier for customers to identify the organisation when they receive information from us, visit our premises, or see Council staff and vehicles at work.

The Council's corporate identity manual is designed to help staff, members and contractors apply the corporate identity correctly, from which font is used on individuals PCs to producing publications and how to use the logo.

It is important that everyone in the Isle of Anglesey County Council is familiar with the corporate identity and knows how to use it so that our brand image is consistent. This will strengthen the Council's position as a professional and effective organisation.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Council supports a number of key partnerships in health and social care, education/children and young people, economic development and tourism. As collaborative partnerships become more and more common, Council representatives need to be clear which partner is leading on communications, and what protocol is in place in dealing with the media.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Public confidence in the Council can be influenced by a range of factors.

There are two situations in which the Council's response, including the way in which we communicate, becomes critical:

- In the event of a crisis e.g. an emergency such as a flood or snow, an accident involving Council property/staff
- In the event of an incident with the potential to damage the Council's reputation e.g. incident involving member of staff/county councillor, inadequate handling of a customer complaint

There are four aspects to critical incident & reputation management:

- Formation of a critical incident & reputation management team
- Issue forecasting and prevention strategies
- Specialised messaging to key stakeholders
- Media strategy

These form part of the **circle of critical incident and reputation management**:



A proactive approach to communication needs to be adopted to ensure that incidents with a high potential to escalate into critical incidents are identified early on. Forecasting and prevention is crucial and the Executive's Forward Work Plan provides a valuable opportunity to identify potential reputation management issues.

Whenever a critical incident is identified, it must be addressed promptly and efficiently. Reassuring, rebuilding and maintaining the confidence of the public should also be fundamental to critical incident/reputation management.

Once an incident has been closed, the opportunity to restore public confidence becomes diminished, therefore it is important that a management plan, including a media strategy, is in place to recover confidence/provide reassurance during an ongoing incident.

STRATEGY

What are we going to do?

Development Priority 1: Increase citizen and community engagement

Key actions:

- Raise public awareness of Council vision and key outcomes
- Hold community engagement events at various locations across the island
- Organise the Council's presence at the Anglesey Show
- Provide tailored communications support for special projects (e.g. Destination Management Plan, Energy Island Programme)
- Promote democratic engagement in the run-up to May 2013 county council elections
- Produce community newspaper 'Môn News' focusing on outcome-related stories
- Assist web team in developing the corporate website
- Develop social media presence on Facebook and Twitter
- Produce annual council tax booklet

Development Priority 2: Be proactive in our relationship with the media to improve the Council's reputation

- Revise Communications Strategy
- Produce regular media releases and photo opportunities
- Hold media briefings on major Council/island milestones
- Hold one-to-one briefings/interviews with senior management/Leader/Chair
- Develop relationship with trade press
- Revise media protocol
- Organise media training for new Senior Leadership Team and Executive

Development Priority 3: Strengthen the use of the Council brand to raise awareness of service

- Working with graphic design team to assist all departments in producing brand-compliant materials
- Providing appropriate photography for Council publicity/reports for our image bank

Development Priority 4: Improve Internal Communications

- Produce and internal communications action plan
- Produce a monthly staff newsletter
- Promote all-staff email 'Y Ddolen/The Link' as primary means of contacting all staff
- Promote staff intranet MonITor
- Publish internal consultation calendar
- Establish a critical incident/reputation management working group to improve procedures for identifying and dealing with critical incidents and reputation management issues

RESOURCES

Who's doing what?

In order to be a customer-focused, outward-facing Council, every member of staff and elected member needs to play their part in improving communications. Responsibility for putting this strategy into practice therefore runs across the whole Council and its employees.



Elected Members

- The Leader of the Council is responsible for the communications portfolio
- The Executive should approve the strategy and ensure the principles are put into practice
- Elected Members should take ownership of the strategy and take direct responsibility for promoting a positive image of the Council. Members need to remember that all behaviour is communication and they should act as 'ambassadors', with a focus on community leadership.
- Elected Members should refer to the Media Protocol outlined in the Appendix (p19) and the members' protocol for self-regulation, in order to strengthen the Council's reputation.
- Should inform the Chief Executive immediately of any issue which has the potential to develop into a critical incident or reputation management issue so that appropriate action can be taken.



Staff

- Should be aware of the Communications Strategy and the Council's key messages
- Should ensure information regarding newsworthy projects, events and consultations reach the Communications Unit
- Should inform the Communications Unit of personal success or achievements for inclusion in the staff newsletter
- Should ensure that all printed and online material, as well as signage and corporate clothing follows the corporate style and Welsh Language Policy by referring to the Corporate Identity Manual and liaising with the Communications Unit/Graphic Design Team on any publications
- Should read and adhere to the Council's Media Protocol (See Appendix)
- Should realise that all contact with customers and partners is part of reputation management and that every member of staff acts as an 'ambassador' for IoACC
- Should inform line manager/HoS immediately of any issue which has the potential to develop into a critical incident or reputation management issue so that appropriate action can be taken.



Senior Leadership Team & Heads of Service

- SLT should communicate that ownership of the Communications Strategy runs across the whole Council at all levels
- SLT should ensure robust mechanisms are in place to disseminate a core brief to staff from SLT meetings
- SLT should provide staff with regular face to face, interactive briefings
- HoS should define and prioritise the communications needs of each service, include communications as an agenda item in key meetings
- SLT/HoS should ensure communication implications are considered at every point in the decision-making process
- SLT/HoS should identify potentially sensitive issues, reports and publications and notify the Communications Unit before they are made public via agendas, meetings or the press/social media as per report checklist
- HoS should be proactive in providing information to the Communications Unit regarding possible positive stories, achievements, public/consultation events
- HoS should provide up-to-date information about the work of the service for the Council's website, MonITor, tourism website and other associated sites in cooperation with the Web and Information Manager
- SLT/HoS are responsible for ensuring all staff understand the role they play in reporting critical incidents/reputation management issues and encouraging a culture where staff feel confident to discuss any issues so that the potential for issues to escalate is identified early and managed effectively.



Corporate Communications Unit

- Are responsible for supervising the Communications Strategy and ensuring it is put into practice
- Should be proactive in providing PR support and advice to officers and elected members
- Have responsibility for raising the profile of communications amongst the strategic leadership team, heads of service and all staff (where appropriate)
- Should continue to develop internal communications
- Are responsible for managing corporate media relations
- Should review the Communications Strategy and annual delivery plan
- Are responsible for monitoring progress against targets and reporting back to the SLT
- Should provide information to new staff on communications issues as part of induction
- Are responsible for producing community newspaper Môn News and staff newsletter Medra Môn
- Should continue to provide communications expertise as website evolves
- Should ensure corporate ownership of website homepage
- Should continue to develop social media platforms
- Should oversee publications produced by services to ensure consistent message and brand
- Should play a key role in developing a media strategy to deal with critical incidents or reputation management issues

EVALUATION

How are we doing?

Evaluation plays an important part in ensuring the communications strategy is effective.

We will monitor progress by:

- Reviewing the action plan at regular intervals (every quarter)
- Reviewing the strategy every 12 months
- Including appropriate questions in the Residents' Survey (annual)
- Evaluating media coverage (ongoing, formally every six months)

This Communications Strategy and the Communications Unit's annual delivery plan are live documents and will be amended as appropriate so that they remain relevant and up to date.

Contacting the Corporate Communications Unit

Gethin Jones gethin.jones@anglesey.gov.uk or 01248 752 130

Gwen Siôn gwen.sion@anglesey.gov.uk or 01248 752 128

Pegi Allsop – Web and Information Manager

Stephen Edwards – Senior Graphic Designer

Steven Jones – Graphic Designer

MEDIA PROTOCOL

For staff and county councillors



www.ynysmon.gov.uk

www.anglesey.gov.uk



Background

Direct contact between the Council and Anglesey residents is increasing through consultation, the web and social networking. However, the media continues to play an important part in forming people's opinions of the Council.

It is essential that we make the most of opportunities offered by the media and work with them in promoting positive stories and responding as efficiently and openly as possible to queries to offer a balanced and informed picture of Council-related issues.

This protocol aims to offer guidance on how officers and members should deal with the media.

Local Authority publicity is guided by the Code of Recommended Practice issued by the National Assembly for Wales in October 2001 as part of its powers under section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 1986. The Code has been designed to cope with the changes introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 including local authorities' duties of consultation, publicity, community planning and in their exercising of the new statutory power to do anything which will promote the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.

1. Communications Unit

- The Council's main point of contact for any matters relating to the press and media is the Communications Unit.
- At all times in the normal working week, at least one member of staff is available to deal with news queries.
- The Communication Unit records all enquiries and the Council's response.
- It also holds a selection of local Welsh & English publications, including the Western Mail and Daily Post for around three months, and receives daily media monitoring bulletins.

2. Media enquiries

- Employees may be approached directly by journalists. The journalist in question should be directed to the Communications Unit, as the query may be contentious, political or touch on several different services and will, more often than not, have a tight deadline. It may also offer an opportunity to promote a particular project and gives us important feedback on the types of queries being received, which informs the long-term communication strategy.
- Communication officers will contact relevant officers for information in order to formulate a response, and clear the response with the appropriate chief officer.
- Major news issues are brought to the attention of the relevant chief officer and any response must be cleared by them and if appropriate, the relevant portfolio holder.
- In the case of the media requesting a political comment, this will be referred to the Leader, relevant member or political group who will inform the Communications Unit of their response so that officers are aware of issues.
- Requests to film, photograph or record on any council premises or land must be referred to the Communications Unit so that relevant risk assessments and public liability insurance are checked.

3. Media Releases

- Media releases are one of the best ways of channelling positive or informative news about the Council
- All council media releases are issued by the Communications Unit only so that the releases follow the corporate style and procedures and to ensure that a central record can be maintained and coverage evaluated.
- Staff and members should be proactive in bringing 'good news' stories to the attention of the Communications Unit in good time, ideally at least a fortnight before publication is required
- When presenting stories, as much background information as possible should be supplied – the who, what, why, where and whens.
- Generally, all media releases should include a quote from the relevant portfolio holder. When the story has a strong ward interest, individual members will be quoted in releases. Local members should also be invited to attend photo calls within their wards. The Communications Unit will clear the quotes with the named persons before use.
- No employees or members of the public will be quoted without their prior permission.
- Services may work with external PR agencies to promote their work. In such instances the Communications Unit should be involved in finalising any Council contribution to the release.
- Media releases are distributed to all Councillors via e-mail (or hard copy if necessary).
- All media releases are posted on the Council's corporate website.
- No guarantees can be provided that media releases will be used by any publication.

4. Council statements

These are issued by **the Communications Unit only** in response to a particular request for comment. Any statements are cleared with relevant officer/portfolio holder before being issued.

- The Council will not normally comment on allegations about individual staff. In all other circumstances 'no comment' will **not** be an adequate response to a media enquiry. The Council is open and accountable and should always explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific query.

5. Media Interviews

- All requests for interviews on corporate matters should be channelled through the Communications Unit.
- The Council Leader and relevant portfolio holders are approached in the first instance with regard to bids for interviews.
- Senior officers respond to interviews on background, technical or operational matters with clearance from Leader or Chief Executive.
- Any bids for officers to take part in 'fly on the wall' type documentaries should also be channelled through the Communications Unit.

6. Working with partners

The Council works with a number of public sector/community partners. Staff should ensure they are clear which partner is leading on communications, and what protocol is in place in dealing with the media.

6. Critical Incidents and Reputation Management issues

A critical incident is any incident where the effectiveness of the Council's response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence an individual, family and/or wider community has in the local authority. Procedure for dealing with a potentially critical incident/reputation management issue:

1. The first step is to manage the incident in line with relevant policies or procedures for the department.
2. Where, in a staff member's opinion, an incident is, or has the potential to escalate into a critical incident, it is essential that it is reported **immediately** to a senior officer – this may be a line manager or head of service.
3. Senior officers will decide:
 - Whether the report is valid
 - Whether the current proposed response will be sufficient
 - Whether the incident should be reported to the Deputy Chief Executive as a critical incident

The decision to declare a critical incident will be based on at least one objective reason why the effectiveness of the Council's response is likely to have a significant impact of public confidence.

An incident should not be declared as critical simply because there is a risk the Council will be criticised. It should be based on the effectiveness of our response and whether it is likely that it will have a significant impact on public confidence.

7. Press and publicity during pre-election period

Special care in relation to media activity and publicity is required during the pre-election period. The central message is: if in doubt, consult your head of service, corporate director or the chief executive before you do anything that might call into question the political impartiality of staff or lead to adverse comment about the Council's actions.

Guidelines for staff are available on the intranet <http://monitor.anglesey.gov.uk/> or contact the Communications Unit.

8. Publicity events and VIP (Ministerial etc.) visits

The Communication Unit should be informed in advance of any events, photo opportunities or visits so that these can be included in the communications schedule. The Communications Unit can also offer advice on publicity in the run up to and after the event, and liaise with the relevant officers, members or partners on issues which may need to be considered.

9. Councillors and media activity

Journalists will inevitably contact individual county councillors for their views of Council-related matters and to pursue a certain story or vice versa.

If Members are approached about a report or item on the agenda of a Council meeting/committee, they are encouraged to notify the Communications Unit so that we can:

- offer advice
- share any relevant technical/background information with the member and the relevant journalist
- offer members a copy of the Council's response/formulate a Council response
- make any relevant officers aware of issues which may arise
- in exceptional circumstances, hold a media conference

The following good practice should be adopted when county councillors feel they can deal with a media enquiry themselves:

- Take down the name of the journalist, contact details and where they are calling from
- Detail what exactly the journalist wishes to know

- Ask for their deadline
- Arrange to phone the journalist back whatever the question. What often looks like a relatively simple enquiry can sometimes grow into a bigger issue.

Also:

- **Don't** ever say 'no comment' or any variation of that theme. It immediately implies there is something to hide.
- **Do** say that you don't have enough information to comment, but you (or someone else) will get back to them...then do!
- **Don't** confirm or deny hearsay or speculation
- **Don't** speak 'off the record'
- **Don't** get over-confident and say something you may regret later
- If in doubt, seek advice from the Communications Unit

The National Assembly code of practice states it is only appropriate to use public resources to publicise individual councillors where it is relevant to their responsibilities within the Council. When any political group or elected member wishes to issue political statements, this can be done through personal e-mail or direct contact with journalist.

10. Further information

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries relating to media-related issues.

Corporate Communications Unit:

Gethin Jones 01248 752130 gethin.jones@anglesey.gov.uk

Gwen Siôn 01248 752128 gwen.sion@anglesey.gov.uk