

<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	16 October 2024
<b>Report Title</b>	Communications Strategy
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
<b>Head of Service</b>	Philip Sutcliffe – Policy and Communications Manager
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Philip Sutcliffe – Policy and Communications Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. To adopt the Communications Strategy 2024 - 2027

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Councils Corporate plan identified the need for effective communications both internally and externally.

Good communication is about engaging with our audiences, not just informing them about issues and services.

Communication is also about giving people the opportunity to express their views and opinions as well as providing information. Good communication leads to better services, a stronger reputation and positive relationships.

Internal and external communications affect all aspects of our day-to-day business: from businesses talking to our teams about planning issues; families using our leisure facilities; councillors advocating on behalf of their residents; and information in the council tax letter about value for money.

Communications is the responsibility of everyone who works for us, not just the communications team.

- 1.2 This strategy (appendix 1) sets out how Swale Borough Council currently communicates with members, officers, partners and members of the public. The strategy sets out the changes the council wishes to make to ensure improvements to our communications service

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In 2022, the council took part in a corporate peer challenge and one of the key recommendations from this was to **Prioritise work on developing your communications and engagement strategy**

- 2.2 A member working group consisting of members from the Administration Groups and the Liberal Democrats met on three occasions to workshop how the council should communicate with residents, partners, members and staff.

- 2.3 A draft of the strategy was considered by the member working group.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 The communications strategy (appendix 1) is adopted. It has been a piece of work which has been co-produced between officers and members.

### 4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not to have a Communications Strategy. This would be possible, however the work undertaken by members in developing the strategy is key in ensuring we provide effective and efficient communications to residents, partner, staff and members. This is option is therefore not recommended

### 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 There has been no formal consultation, however the strategy has been co produced between members and officers.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This strategy meets the outcomes in the Running the Council section of the corporate plan 2023-2027,
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no direct costs to produce the strategy, however the strategy does acknowledge that Swale has the lowest number of communications staff of any council in Kent and there are some areas of the strategy which will require additional investment to deliver.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	There is no statutory requirement for the council to have a communications strategy. An effective communications function will ensure compliance with relevant legislation and codes of practice including the Code of Conduct on Local Authority Publicity, accessibility regulations and publicising sentencing outcomes.
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct crime and disorder implications of this strategy
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	There are no direct Environmental Emergency implications of this strategy
Health and Wellbeing	There are no direct Health and Wellbeing implications to the adoption of this strategy, however effective council communications will enable residents to access services which may have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing
Safeguarding of Children, Young	There are no direct safeguarding implications of this strategy

People and Vulnerable Adults	
Risk Management and Health and Safety	There are no direct health and safety implications of this strategy
Equality and Diversity	<p>Equalities and diversity run throughout council activity, and the strategy will support this work.</p> <p>Our communications cannot solely rely on digital communications, which would exclude sections of our community who do not have access to these channels.</p> <p>Digital communications need to be accessible to those who use assistive technologies, which the strategy supports.</p>
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no direct privacy or data protection implications of this strategy

## **7 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Communications Strategy 2024-2027

## **8 Background Papers**