



AGENDA

For a meeting of the
ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

to be held on

THURSDAY, 12 APRIL 2007

at

2.30 PM

in

**THE WITHAM ROOM, COUNCIL OFFICES, ST. PETERS HILL,
GRANTHAM**

Duncan Kerr, Chief Executive

Panel Members:	Councillor Robert Conboy, Councillor Mrs Joyce Gaffigan, Councillor Mano Nadarajah (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Norman Radley, Councillor Robert Murray Shorrock, Councillor Michael Taylor (Chairman), Councillor Thomas John Webster and Councillor Avril Williams
Scrutiny Officer:	Paul Morrison 01476 406512 p.morrison@southkesteven.gov.uk
Scrutiny Support Officer:	David Lambley 01476 406297 d.lambley@southkesteven.gov.uk

Members of the Panel are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed below.

1. **COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**
To receive comments or views from members of the public at the Panel's discretion.
2. **MEMBERSHIP**
The Panel to be notified of any substitute members.
3. **APOLOGIES**
4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Members are asked to declare any interests in matters for consideration at the meeting.
5. **ACTION NOTES**
The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8th March are attached for information.
(Attached)

6. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

7. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

8. DIGITV

The Panel will receive a presentation on the DigiTV project and hear about an existing project run by Kirklees District Council.

9. ROLE AND FUNCTION OF COUNCILLORS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The panel will scrutinise the role and function of Councillors in the 21st Century.

10. COUNCIL MEETING TIMES AND DATES

The Panel will scrutinise Council meeting times and dates.

11. REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Panel will scrutinise the draft Communications Strategy.

(Attached)

12. EQUALITIES

The Panel will note the minutes of the Equalities and Diversity steering group meetings of 18th January and 22nd February.

(Attached)

13. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

14. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

(Attached)

15. WORK PROGRAMME

(Attached)

16. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Representatives on outside bodies to give update reports.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, DECIDES IS URGENT.

WORKING STYLE OF SCRUTINY

The Role Of Scrutiny

- To provide a “critical friend” challenge to the Executive as well as external authorities and agencies
- To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Scrutiny Members should take the lead and own the Scrutiny Process on behalf of the public
- Scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services

Remember...

- Scrutiny should be member led
- Any conclusions must be backed up by evidence
- Meetings should adopt an inquisitorial rather than adversarial style of traditional local government committees



MEETING OF THE ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 8 MARCH 2007 2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Stephen O'Hare (note 159 onwards)

Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Mike Taylor (Chairman)
Councillor Avril Williams

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Service Manager, Performance Management and Engagement (Notes 150-158)
Management Accountant (Note 159 only)
Scrutiny Support Officer (2)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Paul Carpenter (Portfolio Holder: Access and Engagement) (note 156 onwards)

Members present were disappointed by the poor attendance at the meeting.

150. MEMBERSHIP

The Panel were notified that Councillor Exton would be substituting for Councillor Conboy, Councillor Stokes would be substituting for Councillor Radley and Councillor O'Hare would be substituting for Councillor Mrs. Gaffigan for this meeting only.

151. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

152. ACTION NOTES

Noted.

153. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- The Scrutiny Officer indicated that he had not heard from North Kesteven District Council about the amount of officer time involved in their youth engagement event.
- The Engagement DSP had referred the Shaping Acute Services consultation paper to the Healthy Environment DSP. A copy of the notes from the Healthy Environment DSP on 16th January 2007 were circulated.

154. DIGITV

Consideration of this item was deferred until the meeting on 12th April 2007 due to the indisposition of the visiting speaker.

155. CLOSURE OF POST OFFICE CARD ACCOUNTS

The Panel scrutinised the briefing paper on the closure of post office card accounts:

- The accounts were set up in 2003 when it was decided that pensioners and those on benefits without their own bank accounts would no longer be able to withdraw cash from post offices.
- The government had announced that it intends to phase out post office card accounts by 2010. This announcement received cross-party opposition.
- The closure of the accounts, which could potentially lead to the closure of post offices, would affect people living in rural areas and jeopardise the sustainability of villages.
- Reliance on transport in private vehicles would be increased if the sustainability of villages was jeopardised because of poor rural bus services.
- Access to a service for the most vulnerable people in society would be removed.
- The withdrawal of post office card accounts could have an adverse impact on the Council's allpay scheme.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Access and Engagement Portfolio Holder should write a letter to the relevant government Minister expressing the DSP's concerns about:

- ***The sustainability of villages***
- ***The effect on vulnerable people***
- ***The impact on the carbon footprint***
- ***The increased reliance on private transport for access to services***

JT/DL to complete rec form. PC to write letter

156. MONITORING OF TELEPHONE CALLS - RESPONSES

Panel members scrutinised report PME1, which provided an update on the performance of the authority against the customer service standards.

- The report illustrated growth within the customer service centre as more services were taken on board. There were dips in standards when new services were added.
- If a call was picked up by the customer service centre within customer service standards but not answered within standards when transferred to the relevant officer, the call would show positively against customer services' performance but would count against the individual officer.
- Members discussed whether a message should cut-in when a

customer was waiting to be answered. There was no support for this idea because of the charge to the customer.

- Results of the 2006/7 residents' survey showed that the telephone was the most popular way of contacting the Council.
- Other aspects of customer service needed reviewing.
 - When away from the office, an e-mail auto-reply with alternate contacts should be generated or another officer should be tasked with checking e-mails.
 - Staff within the customer service centre should notify members of the public when they have forwarded an e-mail to a relevant officer; this should include details of the officer dealing with their request.
- Recording of communications against customer service standards needed to be more effective.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Engagement DSP recommended that the Service Manager, Performance Management and Engagement should carry out proactive work with Service Managers promoting the Council's customer service standards and their monitoring.

SY to liaise with service managers

157. ROLE AND FUNCTION OF COUNCILLORS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

This item was deferred for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 12th April 2007, due to the absence of key proponents at the meeting.

Correspondence received by the Chief Executive on a call for evidence on strengthening the role of rural councillors was circulated. A working group could be created to look into this.

158. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Noted.

- Indicators SK21 and SK22 were under review. A report would be submitted to the Cabinet.
- SK23 had risen to 534 self-service transactions. This was still below target.
- SK70 and SK71 had been coloured incorrectly. These were on target.

159. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Noted.

- Revised budget figures had not been included because these were only approved when the budget for 2007/8 was set at the meeting of the full Council on 1st March 2007.
- No budget profiling had been done for 2006/7 however this would be in place for 2007/8.
- Support service costs had been stripped from the breakdown of

expenditure for each service.

- Most areas were on course for being on budget.

ACTION POINT:

The financial report should include details of which month the breakdown of figures covers. DS to include month

160. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted. The review of the Communications Strategy had been scheduled for a decision “not before April”.

ACTION POINT:

1. To include on the agenda for 12th April 2007:

- *DigiTV*
- *The role and function of Councillors in the 21st century and the times and days of meetings*

DL to include on agenda
DL, PM to invite portfolio holders and DSP
Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen

2. To invite all members of the Cabinet and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of all DSPs to the presentation on DigiTv.

161. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 15:10.

Agenda Item 11

REPORT TO ENGAGEMENT DSP

REPORT OF: SERVICE MANAGER – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & ENGAGEMENT

REPORT NO.: POI 2

DATE: 12 APRIL 2006

TITLE:	Draft Communications Strategy and Protocols and Guidelines
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	n/a
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	n/a

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Access Cllr Paul Carpenter, Access and Engagement Portfolio		
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Access and Communication		
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	n/a		
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	n/a		
INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Carried out and appended to report? To be conducted once draft agreed	Full impact assessment required?	Yes
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Customer Service Standards		

1. INTRODUCTION

The draft Communications Strategy and guidelines for communication are enclosed. The strategy outlines why communication is important and includes an action plan for the next two years. The protocols and guidelines have been developed to help employees communicate successfully are also attached for consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- The Engagement DSP consider the attached draft strategy and guidelines, and make any suggestions for improvement that they consider should be included before the strategy is submitted to Cabinet.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Included within the strategy are a number of areas that require clarification or consideration. These are:

- Confirmation that corporate font size is verdana 11.
- Signage of letters – currently different in each service. It is proposed that this should be decided by the Corporate Heads.
- Roll-out of the corporate pre-printed letterhead.
- Use of one corporate identity i.e. bringing in arts, leisure etc. into the s.k.d.c. identity.
- Access to electronic diaries throughout the council.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND ASSESSED

Not applicable

5. COMMENTS OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

6. COMMENTS OF MONITORING OFFICER

7. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICE MANAGER

Not applicable

8. CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The communication strategy and the two year action plan incorporated within it, aims to improve communication within the council. It is proposed that its implementation will be overseen by a new council-wide communications group.

9. CONTACT OFFICER

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DRAFT CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
2007-2009

Version 0.3
16 March 2007

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1. Foreword chief executive

Duncan / Leader to write or approve?

2. Introduction

The Council is committed to continuously improving and adapting its services to reflect the needs of its residents and customers, and has a vision and set of values and priorities to reflect this. To ensure their success, they must be clearly and openly communicated, firstly so that our residents and customers know what the Council is aspiring to provide for them, and secondly, so that our staff and partners have clear understanding of the Council's vision and contribute towards delivery of services in this way.

3. The way we do things

We are committed to improving our services to reflect the needs of our residents and customers. Our vision, values and priorities reflect this and focus the attention of everyone at SKDC, forming the cornerstone for the development of our ambitions, corporate priorities, service delivery plans and actions.

In terms of this strategy, our vision and values are the blueprint of all our communications: from the information material we produce, the way we talk to our colleagues and our customers, to the many ways in which we show our commitment to clear, friendly and open communications.

Together, the vision and values reflect 'the way the council does things around here'.

Our Vision, Values and Priorities

Our Vision

"Shaping the future together with our partners and residents to develop a place where people really matter – and being recognised as a council that provides brilliant services"

Our Values

We will be a Council that remains open and honest at all times.

We will be a Council that shows a passion for service.

We will be a Council that gets things done efficiently and effectively.

Our Corporate Plan and Priorities

Our key priorities have been identified from consultation with residents,

To further improve the quality of communication with residents.

To promote access to services and deliver good customer service to all.

To enhance the quality of life by reducing anti-social behaviour.

To further improve recycling and minimize waste.

To provide the catalyst for town centre regeneration.

To make the best use of resources at our disposal.

To enable the provision of quality affordable housing.

Our Corporate Plan for 2006-2009 set out how we aim to deliver these.

4. Our stakeholders

To understand and define the complex environment SKDC operates in, we need to identify our key stakeholders. Each stakeholder group has different requirements in terms of information, context, presentation and timeliness, and we need to know what these are, so that we can map out our communications activities.

The term 'stakeholders' refers to groups or individuals who have an interest or involvement in SKDC. They are:

Residents/service users (of which there are many subgroups)
Staff
Councillors (members)
Trade unions
Town and parish councils
Media – local, regional and national, specialist and ethnic minority media
Partners/partnerships, including Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), voluntary and community groups, religious groups, recipients of council grants, etc.
Other councils
Voluntary and community sector
Business sector
Suppliers
Government departments and agencies
Auditors and inspectors
National opinion formers, such as civil servants, ministers, MPs, think tanks

5. Why communication is important

Excellent communication, both externally with our residents, customers and partners and internally with elected members and officers is crucial for the council to deliver services that meet the needs and expectations of our residents.

We rely on accurate consultation with our residents and views of members so that we can shape and improve our services for the future. It is important that residents can fully appreciate the wide range of services that we provide via signage and corporate branding, and that they are aware of the quality and quantity of service that they can expect.

We must therefore listen, learn and deliver for our residents consistently and in doing so they will gain confidence in their council.

6. Communicating well – a shared responsibility

For our communication to be effective, it must be owned and supported by all staff and members: members of staff and councillors have responsibility for communications in the way they answer the phone, write a letter or deal with a member of the public. Each leaflet or newsletter we produce, every letter we send out and our overall manner and tone of voice say something about our organisation and influence our reputation. Communication may be verbal, non-verbal, written or signed, but should always be clear, appropriate, and timely.

For this strategy to be effective, we must realise that this is a corporate strategy: each and every one of us has a role to play.

As this strategy affects the whole council, it is proposed that its delivery is a shared responsibility and a council-wide communications group will be formed in order to achieve this.

7. Aims of communications strategy

The aims of this strategy are:

- To ensure all our communications are fit for purpose.
- To promote the council's brand and corporate identity.
- To improve our reputation.
- To improve internal communications with staff and members.

8. How to communicate well

Communication can be described as "the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions or information by speech, writing, or signs".

Good communication is necessary to support our service delivery and promote good working relations.

When communicating we should consider:

- Whatwe are trying to achieve, is action needed or understanding
- Who.....is the recipient, and what are their needs and understanding
- Why.....do we need to communicate
- Where.....shall we
- When.....timing
- How.....the most appropriate format, for example, letter, email, website, telephone; in person

9. Our reputation

Our reputation within the community we serve is important to us. MORI's research consistently shows that councils with the highest service satisfaction ratings among their communities are the ones that best demonstrate they provide value for money in the services they deliver, communicate well and listen to their communities. These findings are backed up by other national surveys which show that there is an increasing demand for better information and consultation from councils.

This is not only done by consistently delivering good services, but also by effectively informing and communicating.

The Council has signed up to the Local Government Reputation Campaign, which highlights 12 actions, which when done well, have been proven to have a positive impact on a council's reputation. Seven of these actions relate to a cleaner, safer and greener environment and five of these relate to communications.

Five communication activities to improve SKDC's reputation

- Manage the media effectively to promote and defend SKDC.
- Provide an A-to-Z guide to council services.
- Publish a regular SKDC magazine or newspaper to inform residents.
- Ensure SKDC's brand is consistently linked to services.
- Communicate well with staff so they become advocates for SKDC.

These areas will be the areas of focus for the communications unit and the new council-wide communications group.

10. Our brand

A brand should be synonymous with the vision and values that we have. Residents' perception of our brand and what it means to them will often have been based on their first impression of us and the way we deliver our services.

By building a brand, customers will be clearer about which services we deliver. As a result, it is necessary to transform our current mix of styles to one corporate identity, which will be instantly recognisable to our customers.

The guidelines

- All letters, brochures, leaflets, posters, promotional items and presentations should follow the corporate identity. The communications unit will advise on the application of the corporate identity and help with any transition.
- All subsidiary brands should be brought into the corporate brand.
- Buildings and assets where there is no signage should undertake to introduce signs in the corporate identity on these assets e.g. car parks, parks, etc.

A corporate identity manual is currently being produced by the communications unit.

11. Where are we now?

In 2004 our CPA report acknowledged that we were responding positively to highlighted the need to improve our communications, both externally and internally.

Since then we have: -

- strengthened our communications unit
- relaunched our residents' magazine (SKtoday)
- improved our website
- and reviewed our brand and corporate identity.

We recognise that there is still a great deal to be done to continuously improve and adapt to meet residents' expectations.

The SWOT analysis below identifies future opportunities to do this.

11.1 SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet member & SMT member responsibility<input type="checkbox"/> Launch of internal newsletter, relaunched external newsletter.<input type="checkbox"/> Communications promoted to 'A' priority.<input type="checkbox"/> New corporate identity approved and being implemented.<input type="checkbox"/> Sign up to Local Government Reputation Campaign<input type="checkbox"/> Professional communications team strengthened & aligned with consultation & performance management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Communications is not always a priority for service deliverers<input type="checkbox"/> Our leaflets, letters, website is not always tailored towards the customer<input type="checkbox"/> Customers are often not aware of the service standards they can expect.<input type="checkbox"/> Customers are not always aware of services SKDC provide in relation to other councils and partners.<input type="checkbox"/> Little knowledge of and engagement with hard-to-reach groups in South Kesteven.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Develop of council's branding to be instantly recognisable with our vision & values.<input type="checkbox"/> Implementing the Local Government Reputation Campaign actions should improve SKDC's reputation.<input type="checkbox"/> Guide to communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Unforeseen events.<input type="checkbox"/> Communications needs to be a shared responsibility of all to be effective<input type="checkbox"/> Sensationalised national media coverage of local government news.

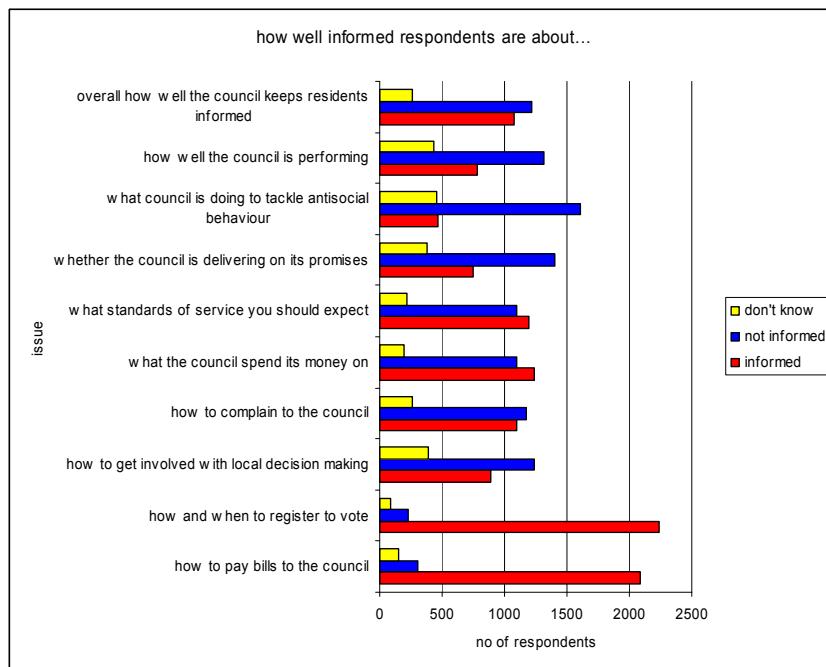
<p>policies and performance indicators will help all officers and members be aware of what is expected and allow us to measure success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training in Plain English currently being rolled-out <input type="checkbox"/> Media training currently being organized. <input type="checkbox"/> Communications strategy is to be owned and implemented by a communications group. 	
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11.2 Residents survey 2007

There is a clear link between the level of information provided to residents, and their satisfaction ratings with their council (MORI).

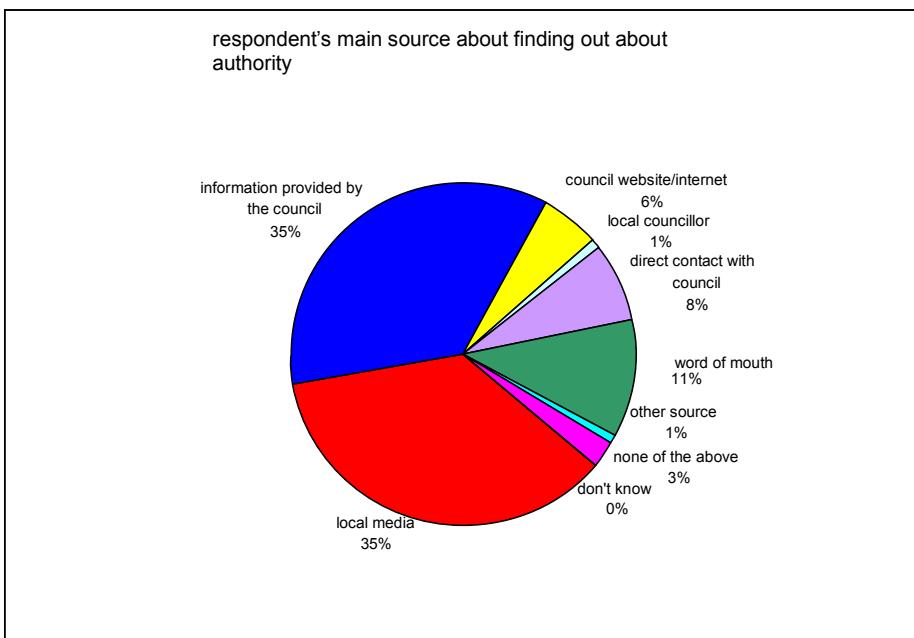
Our residents receive many different forms of communications from services. Early findings from the residents survey conducted in September 2006 indicate that there is a large variation in how well-informed respondents feel about various issues:

- Respondents appear to be well-informed regarding how to pay bills, or how to register to vote.
- Just over half feel well-informed about how SKDC spends its money and 49% know what standards of services they should expect from us.
- They appear to be less well-informed about if we are delivering our promises. In 2003 respondents were asked a similar question and responded more favorably with 51% answering that they felt well-informed.



The following chart shows the main source respondents use to find out about SKDC. Respondents were only allowed to choose one option. The main sources are:

- The local media - chosen by 809 respondents.
- Information provided by the council - chosen by 798 respondents.
- Word-of-mouth - chosen by 239 respondents.



It is therefore important that our residents receive communication that is timely, accurate, and available in a variety of formats, and that informs them of what the authority communicates to the customer the level of service that they can expect.

12. Action plan 2007 - 2009

To help meet the challenges of the SWOT analysis and ensure we focus on the five core elements of the Local Government Reputation Campaign, an action plan for the next two years has been developed. Its implementation will be overseen by the new council-wide communications group.

The action plan will follow the five areas recommended in the Local Government Reputation Campaign.

12.1 Managing the media effectively to promote and defend SKDC

	Action	Time-scale	Costs £	Lead officer(s)	Outcomes
1	Proactively generate good news stories showing impacts on people in the community.	Monthly	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Improved reputation
2	Develop directory of council spokespeople on subjects to ensure media enquiries can always be responded to in good time. For internal use.	April 2007	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Media responses always available
3	Provide public relations defence against inaccurate allegations/ reporting.	As required	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Public awareness of accurate facts
5	To develop a corporate annual diary of opportunities to drive the communication unit's activities.	April 2007	N/A	Communications Manager	Proactive planning
6	To continue to develop good media relations via meeting with media.	Annually	N/A	Corporate Head Partnerships & Organisational Improvement	To maximise awareness of SKDC services
7	Attendance at relevant meetings to prepare internal/external coverage of events.	As required	N/A	Communications Manager	Proactive communication coverage
8	Provide media training to Cabinet, SMT, OMT, service managers & appropriate members of staff	April 2007		Human Resources Manager	Trained staff available to respond to media
9	Staff educated to use public relations to handle press enquiries to ensure protection of staff,	March / April 2007	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Staff protection, reputation & consistent

	reputation and consistency of messages.				message
10	PR guidelines to be developed informing staff of newsworthiness & media requirements.	June 2007	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Increase staff awareness
11	Press cutting service – SKDC stories in the media on intranet.	June 2007	N/A	Communications Manager	Library of stories

12. 2 Provide an A-to-Z guide of SKDC's services

	Action	Timescale	Costs £	Lead officer(s)	Outcomes
1	To produce a bi-annual A-to-Z of SKDC's services, delivered to each household.	Bi-annually	12,000 Per issue	Communications Manager	Improved customer knowledge
2	To liaise with service managers to ensure that the A-to-Z section on SKDC's website is up-to-date.	6 monthly	N/A	Communications Manager	Improved customer knowledge
3	Include LCC services in A-to-Z to increase residents' understanding of multi-tier responsibilities.	Bi-annually	As above	Comms unit	Improved customer knowledge
4	Produce welcome pack for new residents, including A-to-Z, welcome letter from CE, councillor info, etc. (Tie in with customer services)	June 2007	To be estimated	Communications Manager	Customer initial contact information
5	Develop welcome area on website similar to welcome pack above.	2007		Comms unit/business transformation	Customer initial contact information

12.3 Publish a regular SKDC magazine or newspaper to inform residents

	Action	Time-scale	Costs £	Lead officer(s)	Outcomes
1	Produce SKtoday bi-monthly in line with future developments in SKDC and local communities.	Bi-monthly	9,200 Per issue	Communications Manager	Better informed residents
2	Monitor distribution and readership of SKtoday	Bi-monthly	N/A	Communications Manager	Ensure distribution achieved satisfactory
3	SKtoday do include 1 page on voluntary and community sector in South Kesteven, 1 page village spotlight, 2 pages on arts.	From April 2007	N/A	Communications Manager	Provide coverage for partners and the arts. Show diversity of SKDC
4	Circulation to include LSP, voluntary and community groups, hard-to-reach groups, etc.	From July 2007	N/A	Communications Manager	Provide information for Voluntary/comm unity groups etc
5	Continue to improve design, contents of SKtoday e.g. using imaginative ways of communicating what services SKDC offers/provides for council tax collected.	Ongoing	N/A	Communications Manager	Increased resident awareness of services
6	Enter SKtoday in national communication awards competition.	2007		Corporate Head of Partnerships & Organisational Improvement	National recognition

12.4 Ensure SKDC's brand is consistently linked to services

	Action	Time-scale	Costs £	Lead officer(s)	Outcomes
1	To further develop and implement corporate identity & apply to all letters, leaflets, etc.	Through out 2007	To be est.	Communications Manager	Corporate identity becomes readily recognisable
2	Produce a corporate identity manual for service managers & advise upon usage. Manual to include 'Are we clear' guidelines.	May 2007	N/A	Communications Manager	Service Mgrs clear regarding corporate identity & plan accordingly
3	Ensure website reflects corporate identity.	June 2007	N/A	Bus. Transformation & Info Mgmt Svce Mgr	Website reflects recognisable corporate identity
4	Branding of signage on buildings and other facilities.	2007/08	To be est.	Service Manager Assets & Facilities	SKDC services/buildings recognisable
6	Welcome to South Kesteven signage on main road entrances to area.	2007/08	10,000 Depen dent on no.	Comms unit/ asset & facilities	South Kesteven area becomes recognisable
7	Maximise use of corporate presentation template and plain English training	March/ April 2007	300	Communications Manager	Staff aware of plain English principles & adopt them
8	Gain Crystal Mark accreditation for all major publications	2007	N/A	Communications Group	Clear and useful documents produced
9	To continue to promote SKDC's commitment to equality and diversity principles and manage the provision of alternative formats and languages within SKDC. To be reflected on the internet.	Contin- uous	N/A	Communications Manager	Inclusion of all our residents
10	All publications produced by SKDC to be designed according to the corporate identity guidelines and to come through the communications unit for	As required	N/A	Communications Manager	Publications have consistent corporate identity & key messages

	advice, support.				
11	To produce a customer-centered video, reflecting SKDC's core values and key messages.	2008	£500 Est.	Communications Manager	
12	Develop a corporate area on SKDC's website, including Corporate Plan, vision, values, etc.	June 2007	N/A	Bus. Transformation & Info Mgmt Svce Mgr	Key documents easily accessible to users

12.5 Communicate well with staff so they become advocates for SKDC

	Action	Time-scale	Costs £	Lead officer(s)	Outcomes
1	To promote council's mission, values and priorities so that everyone understands and knows how they contribute towards these principles.	March 2007 and ongoing	N/A	Communications Manager	Consistency and understanding regarding key message
2	Continuously reinforce our mission, values and priorities through a variety of channels.	As required	N/A	Communications Manager	Consistency and understanding regarding key message
3	To continue to produce Skoop! newsletter 6 times a year and encourages all to contribute to its contents.	Bi-monthly		Public Relations Manager	Communication form for staff
4	To work towards a staff rewards scheme.	2007/08	To be est.	SMT/ OMT	Staff motivation
5	To produce top 10 achievements this year and promote this through PR and SKtoday.	Annually	N/A	Public Relations Manager	Staff recognition
6	To work together with a representative group of staff to identify their intranet requirements.	May 2007	To be est.	Project Officer Business Trans. & Info. Mgmt	Fit for purpose intranet
7	To advise on intranet contents and manage procedures.	2007/08	N/A	Project Officer Business Trans. & Info. Mgmt	Fit for purpose intranet
8	To actively promote and encourage staff suggestion scheme and feedback on	Quarterly	To be est.	Consultation & Engagement Officer	Staff consulted for improvement suggestions

	action.				
9	To continue to deliver the core brief, and review regularly.	2008	N/A	Communications Manager	Informed & consulted staff
10	To work with staff and HR on improving the induction process. To pull together corporate information on procedures and other topics, for the intranet and the employee handbook.	August 2007	To be est.	Human Resources Manager	Improved induction process
11	To produce a graphic overview of newly elected councillors in an attractive, easy to use format.	June 2007	To be est.	Public Relations Manager	New councilors communicated

COMMUNICATIONS
DRAFT PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

Description	Page
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PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

Introduction to the Communications Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed to help employees communicate successfully. They include guidance on council policy regarding our corporate identity and protocols regarding communicating with a variety of recipients in various manners.

Communications with Councillors

Our elected members are an essential link between the public and the council's decision-making process. Accordingly, it is essential that they are provided with up to date and accurate information, to aid their decision making.

The Council operates a Cabinet structure with six members being responsible for a portfolio of services. The communications linking up group survey in 2006 showed that 55% of staff knows who their portfolio holder is for their service.

Communicating with Residents

- Letters
- Telephone
- Text Messaging
- Email
- Posters
- Leaflets
- Brochures and directories
- Newspapers
- Website
- Television and Radio
- Statutory publications

The following part of the toolkit aims to clarify the current policy guidelines for each type of communication.

Choosing the most appropriate method of Communication

Choosing the most appropriate method of communication is important. Often the choice is dictated by statutory guidance, the method used by the originator and practicalities. However, time should be spent considering the method undertaken.

THE STANDARD EXPECTED FROM ALL OF US

Our Council has customer service standards that it has promised residents and customers can expect when contacting us:

We Will:

- Respond to your needs in a polite and helpful way.
- Listen and consider your needs as a valued customer.
- Dress appropriately, wear name badges and give names so you know whom you are talking to.
- Have private interview facilities available if you require them.
- Answer telephone calls within 10 rings.
- Answer your letters within 10 working days.
- Acknowledge your emails within 1 working day of receipt, and answer within 8 working days of receipt.
- Provide easy to understand information in a suitable format.
- See you within 10 minutes of your appointment time.
- Investigate any complaint you may have by following the Council's complaints procedure.
- Inform all sections of your changes and major events on your behalf with your permission.
- Provide and advertise appropriate provision to deal with serious problems that can be dealt with out-of-hours.

These standards are important, as they are what customers will measure us by.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Our achievements for the above are and will continue to be monitored and reported upon. Performance management and engagement can offer advice relating to this.

THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATING

We should be aware of the legal implications of engaging in communications. If you are unsure as to the legal status of communications, please contact legal services.

Copyright

Copyright law protects original pieces of work from unauthorised reproduction and distribution. It is usually owned by the author of the material whose permissions should usually be sought before use in any material.

Defamation

Defamation of character e.g. libel is the publishing of a false statement that negatively affects someone's reputation. Care should be taken when communicating information regarding individuals are based in fact and do not cause offence.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1984 protects the privacy and protection of data of individuals in the UK. The council has access to large amounts of data on residents and service users and must follow the correct guidelines regarding use and storage of these.

Communicating with Staff

Flourishing staff communications is essential for an efficient and vibrant council.

Mori research shows that staff who feel well informed are twice as likely to feel involved in their organisation and to feel they can make the best use of their skills and abilities. They are also more likely to act as advocates for the organisation they work for, without being prompted.

Our staff are surveyed annually. During 2006 two surveys have been undertaken, the staff survey and a communications link-up group survey. They said:

- 82.5% know how their job helps the Council to achieve its objectives.
- 73% enjoy working for the council
- 56% think that they can rely on support from staff in other sections to help achieve the council's objectives
- 93% are willing to give support to staff in other sections

Current methods of communicating with staff

There are various methods currently in place to aid staff communication. These are:

Strategic Management Team (SMT) Weekly email – email to all staff from a member of SMT detailing this weeks actions

Skoop

Staff newspaper. This internal newspaper is written by staff for staff.

Communications linking up group

A representative group of volunteers to help look at communications issues and make suggestions for improvement.

Intranet

89% of staff have access to the intranet, 58% think that it is useful and informative. The intranet contains a variety of information for staff use, including electronic documents and guidance from all sections, a link to modern.gov, press releases etc. A project is currently underway to work together with staff to establish how the intranet can be further improved.

All staff e-mails

These are managed by IT and should not be sent as a normal matter of course by staff members.

Communicating using the media

It is vital that the Council manage its relationship with the media in order to protect its reputation and gain due credit when appropriate. To facilitate this, the following should be undertaken when dealing with the media:

Guidelines

- All media enquiries should be dealt with in the first instance by the Communications team, in order to protect the reputation of the council and its staff and members.
- A directory of spokespeople who are able to speak in relation to different subjects will be compiled to ensure that there is always someone available to respond to press enquiries.
- Media training will be provided for those members and staff who require it.
- Service managers are encouraged to volunteer good news stories to the communications team for use. Guidance will be developed regarding this.

Communicating in other languages

Our residents and customers sometimes require our letters, brochures and information in their own language. This can be facilitated for customers who are also on the telephone or personally visiting us.

Guidelines

- All brochures, consultation etc. should include information on how to obtain the information in an alternative language. This offer should be written in the appropriate language format, and can be facilitated by the communications team. If your information is being corporately branded, this will be provided as a matter of course.
- Language line is available as a service for customers personally visiting us or on the telephone.

How to use Language Line – Telephone 0845 310 9900

Customer Personally Visiting

- Try to identify the language needed, if possible.

- Telephone the Language Line operator and quote your ID number (see below), your name and the language required. Stay on the line until an interpreter is contacted.
- Introduce yourself to the interpreter, and brief them about the situation.
- Start the conversation using the interpreter.

Telephone Customer

- Identify the language needed, if possible.
- Telephone the Language Line operator and quote your ID number (see below), your name and the language required. Explain that you need a 3 way conference call.
- Language line will set up a conference call, so that you can talk together. Give the operator the telephone number of the customer. They will connect you to the interpreter, then contact the customer.

Language Line ID codes (account no. C6362)

L22658 – Supported housing, housing solutions and tenancy services

L22659 – Revenue Services

L22660 – Access and Facilities

L22661 – Environmental Health

L22662 – Corporate Services (any services not listed above)

Communicating in Braille, large print, audio tape or disc

We are committed to providing clear information and making our services and information assessable to all our residents, staff and partner organisations.

We are able to present our information in Braille, large print, audio tape or disc. This can be facilitated by the communications team.

Communicating using sign language

We have a British Sign Language interpreting service for deaf people to access all of our services. This can be facilitated by the communications team.

Communicating by Letter

Communicating by letter is the most traditional way of contacting our residents and customers. It is useful to envisage the recipient when constructing the letter and consider if it is easy to understand.

The Guidelines

- Letters should be typed in Verdana font size 12 (Is this agreed?)
- Use the corporate branded headed paper
- Follow plain English guidelines (standard letters may apply for plain English accreditation)
- Be replied to within 10 working days, and monitored to ensure this
- Signed by (this is currently different in each area of the council, should service managers decide?.....)
- Contain contact details of the officer who is able to resolve any related enquiries i.e. email address, telephone number

Plain English Guidelines for use in letters, brochures, leaflets etc.

Letters should be in plain English, this essentially means the following:

Purpose

- Is the purpose obvious or stated early and clearly?

Content

- Is the information accurate, relevant and complete, anticipating readers' questions and answering them? Are essential technical terms explained or defined?

Structure

- Is the information well organised and easy to navigate through, with appropriate headings and subheadings?
- Is there appropriate use of illustrations, diagrams and summary panels?

Style and grammar

- Is the style appropriate for the audience, with a good average sentence say length (15-20 words), plenty of active voice verbs, and reasonably short paragraphs?
- Is the document free of pomposity, verbosity and officialese?
- Is the text grammatically sound and well punctuated?
- Is capitalization consistent in text and headings?
- If there is a contents page, are its headings consistent with those in the text?

Layout and design

- Does the document look good?
- Is the type easily readable and is there enough space between lines of type?
- Is there a clear hierarchy of headings and spaces?

- Have emphasis devices, such as bold type been used well?

Communicating by E-mail / Text Messaging

With the developments in electronic communications the use of emails and text messaging is becoming more important and common as a communication tool.

It has the advantages of speed and efficiency for both the customer and the officer. It may also be sent automatically from the customer service centre as a response.

The Guidelines

- Acknowledge within 1 working day and answer within 8 working days of receipt (and monitored to ensure this)
- Should be typed in Verdana font size 11
- Follow plain English guidelines (standard letters may apply for plain English accreditation)
- Signed by (this is currently different in each area of the council, should service managers decide?.....)
- Contain contact details of the officer who is able to resolve any related enquiries i.e. email address, telephone number
- If you are likely to be away from the office or not able to pick up your emails, the out of office facility should be used to direct people trying to contact you to another member of staff who can help them.

Website and Intranet

It is important that information and advice is kept up to date on both the intranet and internet that they accurately mirror information contained in letters, leaflets etc.

The Guidelines

- Service managers are responsible for ensuring that information and advice regarding their service is up to date and appropriate.
- Training will be provided by Business Transformation in order to facilitate this. Service managers should identify an information coordinator with this responsibility. Guidance can be provided regarding content by the communications unit if required.

Television and Radio Interviews

Television and radio interview requests should in the first instance be managed via the communications unit, who will liaise with the relevant officers. Appropriate media training will be provided to all officers and members who require it.

Telephone and Mobile Telephones

We receive 284,500 of telephone calls a year, both via the customer services centre and directly dialed to officers. We also telephone internally.

The telephone may be the first contact the customer has with the council, and it is imperative that calls are handled quickly and efficiently, without the customer being passed from one officer to another.

The Guidelines

- Answer the telephone promptly and ensure that all ringing telephones are "picked up", using the hunt group facility or group pick up.
- If you are likely to be away from the office ensure that your telephone is diverted. Corporately telephones will divert after 7 rings.
- Voicemail can be used, but should be checked and replied to.
- Answer calls within 10 rings.
- Calls should be answered in a pleasant manner, stating good morning/afternoon, your section/team name and your name.
- If you are not able to answer the enquiry, take a message and make sure that it is passed on to someone who can help the customer. The message should note the date and time of the call, customer name and contact number, and a brief summary of the enquiry.

- Occasionally officers may experience upset or angry customers. These should be dealt with politely and calmly. If a customer is continuously rude or using bad language, you ~~should~~ warn them that this is not acceptable and that if it continues you will have to hang up the call.

Face to Face Visitors

Face to face communication is often the most successful form of communicating. This is as it is easier to read body language etc. and build up a rapport with the person.

Guidelines

- If you have an appointment with a customer into the customer service centre complete the Corporate Visitor Process form which can be found on the intranet under customer services section. There is a facility to enable you to book a private booth within the customer service area if you require one.

This will ask you to detail who you are meeting with and will enable the customer service centre to prepare a visitors badge and call you when your customer arrives. This demonstrates a welcoming proactive customer focus.

Access to Diaries

The majority of officers have access to and use an electronic diary. In order to ensure that we operate efficiently our diaries should be available to all of us. This facility enables electronic invitations to meetings etc. Private appointments can be tagged accordingly and therefore not viewable to all.

Guidelines

- Officers should make use of electronic diaries and give all staff access to these. Time when unavailable should be booked out.

Agenda Item 12

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY STEERING GROUP

18TH JANUARY 2007

Present: Councillor Frances Cartwright (Cabinet Member) (Chairperson)
Councillor Mike Taylor (Chairman of Engagement DSP)
Tony Campbell (Director of Tenancy Services)
Carol Drury (Staff representative)
Joyce Slater (Service Manager, Human Resources & OD)
Hilary Lovell (Assistant HR Manager)

Apologies: Councillor John Kirkman (Chairman of Resources DSP)
Anne Jappie (Staff representative)

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

An update was given on the progress of equality impact assessments. Managers had been given a deadline of 31st January 2007 to complete assessments with a high relevance. An update would be given at the next meeting on the number of assessments that had been carried out.

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

The group went through the draft disability equality scheme and made various changes. The main change was changing the term disabled people to people with disabilities. Further work will be done on the scheme and, in particular, the action plan for the next meeting.

REPORT FOR SMT ON LEVEL 3 ACTION PLAN

The group considered the report for SMT which was an update on the revised requirements of level 3 of the equality standard but also advised on what needs to be in place before an action plan for level 3 can be developed. The group made some minor changes to the report and the Chairman asked that the following paragraph be added to the report:

“The Chairman of the Steering Group, Councillor Frances Cartwright, has requested that one member of the SMT attends each meeting of the Steering Group and also that SMT nominate another Corporate Head to be part of the group”.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 2.30 pm on Thursday 22nd February 2007.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY STEERING GROUP

22nd February 2007

Present: Councillor Frances Cartwright (Cabinet Member) (Chairperson)
Councillor Mike Taylor (Chairman of Engagement DSP)
Geoff Plummer (Strategic Director)
Teena Twelves (Corporate Head, Sustainable Communities)
Carol Drury (Staff representative)
Anne Jappie (Staff representative)
Hilary Lovell (Assistant HR Manager)

Apologies: Tony Campbell (Director of Tenancy Services)
Joyce Slater (Service Manager, Human Resources & OD)

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

An update was given on the progress of equality impact assessments. The figure reported for BVPI SK84 at the end of January 2007 was 35.5%. As at the date of this meeting the figure now stands at 41%. The group were updated on those high relevance policies that were still outstanding. An email is to be sent to all Service Managers reminding them of the high relevance policies still outstanding and also asking them to move on to carrying out impact assessments on the medium and low relevance policies.

The list of policies was reviewed. Geoff Plummer and Teena Twelves felt that the Town Centre Master Plans were documents in their own right and should be impact assessed. Teena to follow this up with Neil Cuttell. Land Use Planning Policies were listed as one policy. Teena to discuss with Mark Harrison and separate the policies, some of which exist and will need an impact assessment and some which will be impact assessed as new policies when they are developed.

REPORT FOR SMT ON LEVEL 3 ACTION PLAN

Feedback was given to the group on the above report.

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

The group discussed the draft action plan that Sarah Leask had produced for the Disability Equality Scheme. Completion dates and who has responsibility for the actions were agreed. Hilary Lovell to agree completion dates not agreed by the group with the relevant Service Managers.

Paul Stokes to be asked, when undertaking the accessibility audit, that this be done not just as a paper exercise but to involve people with disabilities.

One of the actions is to “review any complaints received twice a year, on the basis of disability, to make sure any issues or adverse impacts of the council’s policies or services are identified and acted upon. It was agreed that complaints received be discussed at every meeting of this group and looked at in terms of any form of potential discrimination.

Councillor Taylor suggested that those staff who were trained in British Language Training should receive some payment for this. The group agreed this should be looked at when an action plan is developed for disability awareness training.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 2.30 pm on Thursday 29th March 2007.

Enagement DSP - Performance Monitoring 2006/07

Those indicators with a number in the PI column are from the Government's Best Value Performance Indicators suite used by many Councils. The remaining indicators are local to SKDC and may be relatively simple measures/indicators only. The reader is asked therefore to exercise an element of caution when interpreting any data attached to them.

IND Type = C - Cumulative/% - Percentage/ CA - Cumulative Average/N - Number/A - Average
 Reporting = blank - Monthly/Q - Quarterly/Y - Yearly/H - Half yearly (Sept)

PI	SKDC Priority Area and PI Description	Lead Officer	IND Type	Reporting	2005/06 SKDC Outturn	2004/05 Upper Quartile	2006/2007 SKDC Target	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	Are We Improving Yr on Yr?	2007/2008 SKDC Targets	2008/2009 SKDC Targets	
ACCESS Priority A																						
SK20	No of visitors to the SKDC website	Andy Nix	C	Q	434,194	N/A	420,000			118,999			281,542				437,328			Y	450,000	460,000
SK21	% of 'application for service' transactions that are dealt with by the CSC - Grantham	Andy Nix	C		N/A	N/A	50%	n/a	22.6%	22.6%	28.7%	28.7%	28.7%	28.7%	32.3%	32.3%	Under review for 2007/08	Under review for 2007/08	n/a	65%	80%	
SK22	% of 'application for service' transactions that are dealt with by the CSC - Area Offices	Andy Nix	C		N/A	N/A	50%	n/a	3.10%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	8.7%	8.7%	16.90%	16.9%	Under review for 2007/08	Under review for 2007/08	n/a	65%	80%	
SK23	No of self service transaction (excludes Internet & Telephone Payments	Andy Nix	N	Q	N/A	N/A	1000			264			338				338*			n/a	1200	1440
SK24	% increase yr on yr in all self service transactions	Andy Nix/Revs Manager	%	Q	169.6%	N/A	10%			0%			60%				60%*			n/a	10%	10%
COMMUNICATIONS Priority A																						
SK70	No. of copies of SK Today issued	Ellen Breur	C	Q	4	N/A	5			1			2				n/a	#REF!		Y	5	5
SK71	No. of SKOOPS issued	Ellen Breur	C	Q	6	N/A	6		1				3				n/a	#REF!		n/a	6	6
SK72	No of Residents that have received a copy of SKToday	Ellen Breur	N	Y	57%	N/A	67%						N/a				n/a			n/a	72%	77%
SK73	No. of staff that feel well informed (measured through staff survey)	Ellen Breur	CA	Y	36%	N/A	50%						N/a				n/a			n/a	60%	65%
SK74	% of PR outputs to media actually published	Ellen Breur	%		81.8%	N/A	82%	100%	100%	83%	90%	88%	88%	86%	82%	95%	#REF!	#REF!	Y	84%	85%	

DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANELS (DSPs) WORK PROGRAMME 2006/7

INTRODUCTION

This Work Programme is partly derived from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, but also contains items that have been brought forward by the DSPs themselves.

Where the item has appeared on the Forward Plan, the anticipated date of the key decision is listed in the second column. The third column shows the last available date that the full DSP can consider this item before the key decision is due to be taken (unless a special meeting is called). This does NOT necessarily mean that the item will appear on the DSP agenda, this will only happen if this is requested by the Chairman or members of the DSP. There will also be instances where there is no DSP meeting before a decision is due to be taken; in these cases the next meeting date after the decision date is shown.

As Cabinet meets monthly and the DSPs meet bi-monthly it is not possible within the current timetable of meetings for the DSPs to consider every single Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision. Scrutiny members are therefore encouraged to read this Work Programme and bring forward items for consideration where they think that an item should be considered by the DSP.

DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANELS (DSPs)
WORK PROGRAMME 2006/7

ENGAGEMENT DSP

<u>ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION</u>	<u>Date item appeared on Forward Plan</u>	<u>DATE OF KEY DECISION (IF APPROPRIATE)</u>	<u>DSP MEETING</u>
Members IT		N/a	Working Group is meeting
Access and Modernisation Group		N/a	Working Group is meeting
Equalities		N/a	To receive minutes of Multi Cultural Consultation Forum
Monitoring of telephone calls - responses		Ongoing	Ongoing
Review of Communications Strategy	Dec 06	Not before April 07	12.04.07
Council meeting times/dates	N/a	N/a	12.04.07 referred from Council 25.01.07
Role and Function of councillors in the 21 st Century	Dec 06	N/a	12.04.07
Use of Digital tv	N/a	N/a	12.04.07