

COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY REPORT January to March 2008

From the Corporate PR and Consultation Manager

Introduction

The Corporate PR and Consultation Manager will update senior staff and members on issues surrounding communications and community engagement on a quarterly basis, via CMT, Executive Committee and Members' Bulletin.

The Council's Community Engagement Strategy and accompanying toolkit is available on the intranet.

1.0 PRESS AND MEDIA

Performance

All Councillors are e-mailed press releases as soon as they are issued to the media, with a printed copy put in the file in the Members' Room. Cuttings are collected weekly, again with copies added to the appropriate folder, they are also scanned and saved on the Teesdale Common area. Press releases are also added to the internet.

There are 2 performance indicators linked to communications.

- The percentage of positive or neutral coverage regarding the Council in the local newspapers compared to negative averaged 81%; up from 77% the previous quarter.
- monitoring the percentage of press releases used by one or more media helps us gauge whether what we send out is actually what the local press want. Take up averaged 93% over the quarter, with a 100% take up rate in January and February.

28 enquiries from the press were logged and responded to during the quarter. The system of referring press queries to me is now embedded, with staff and members understanding the need for a speedy response (the same day) when I contact them with a media query. Similarly, Executive Members continue to respond promptly when contacted to agree quotes for inclusion in press releases.

2.0 TALK TEESDALE

The second issue of Talk Teesdale will be delivered to homes and businesses in the District from Monday 2 June. Feedback received from readers of the first issue was 100% positive. It is being distributed alongside Durham County Council's 'Countywide' magazine. The last issue will follow in October.

An Editorial Panel has been established to decide on content for each issue, including member representation, and I am very grateful for their enthusiasm for the task and creativity.

3.0 LGR

I am a member of the county-wide group which meets to discuss LGR communications issues. The main focus of work at the present time is communicating 'change' to both internal and external audiences. A series of three events, organised by the group, to introduce the process of change and background to the new authority for stakeholders was held in early March in locations around County Durham. Most recently I have been tasked with drafting a protocol and toolkit on behalf of the group to help/encourage the various workstreams with communication activities.

4.0 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A corporate consultation calendar has been created for setting out any consultation work that is happening across the council.

Teesdale Listens continues, with visits to Evenwood, Middleton in Teesdale, Etherley, Ingleton, Stainton and Sreatlam, Gainford and Winston complete.

This is a fantastic opportunity for ward members to show community leadership, and for local people to meet them and the Chief Executive and Council Leader. Teesdale Listens is a regular item at Corporate Management Team and Executive briefing to ensure progress is made on the actions arising during the ward visits.

A protocol and guidance notes for have been issued to all Councillors. To find out more about arranging a Teesdale Listens visit in your ward, contact PA to the Chief Executive, Emma Martin on x211.

5.0 REPUTATION

The Council is signed up to the LGA's Reputation project. This involves implementing 12 key facets of reputation work (relating to communications and environment) over the next 12 months. With LGR in mind, some of the actions need to be adapted, but the project provides a helpful framework.

The five ongoing actions relating to communications have been implemented. They are:

- Media management system
- Provision of an A to Z guide to council services
- Regular publication of a council magazine/newspaper
- Effective and consistent branding
- Internal communications

If you would like to know more about the project – there is a very comprehensive website – www.lga.gov.uk/reputation, or come and have a chat with me about it.

