

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (draft)

2010 - 13



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I. FOREWORD

There will be big changes in local government over the next few years and these are likely to affect what we do and how we do things. This will make it more important than ever that we communicate effectively with staff and the local community.

Local councils have not been good at communicating with residents about what they are doing for their communities. Satisfaction with councils has been declining nationally over the last 10 years despite improvements in performance. While Plymouth City Council's performance has improved dramatically, there has not been a corresponding improvement in how our customers perceive us.

Changing this at the same time as we are undergoing significant change isn't about throwing more resources at telling residents what we are doing. We need to ensure that we get better at communicating with residents about the issues that matter most to them, using the methods that suit them best, and we need to do this with fewer resources. That's why Better for Less is the theme of this strategy. This means having clearer messages, being smarter about targeting audiences, using our communications channels more effectively and joining up communications activities internally and with our partners.

Our performance as an organisation depends on this. It is very well established that organisations that are successful in communicating clear messages and engaging staff and customers in a two-way dialogue perform better and have higher levels of customer satisfaction.

This means good communication needs to be embedded in the culture of the entire organisation – at every level in every service area. How we speak and listen to customers or colleagues, how we approach team meetings, how we keep our workplaces, how we write letters or emails; how we present ourselves to our customers and how we talk to partners and colleagues in other departments – all have an impact on the organisation's performance and reputation.

The Council's reputation is therefore in the hands of everyone who works for the Council. This strategy sets out the key priorities for how we improve communication as an organisation. If we work together to achieve the objectives set out in this strategy, the benefits to everyone who works for the Council and to our customers should be easy to see.

2. ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

This strategy aims to provide the focus for communications activities across the council over the next three years.

It sets out:

- the aims of our communications
- the principles that govern all our communications
- the high level outcomes
- the activities that will deliver them

The strategy will be supported by detailed action plans for the Corporate Communications and for departments.

The Corporate Communications service is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this strategy and leading on key areas such as media relations, visual identity, web development and corporate publications. It also supports the communications activities of all Council services.

The strategy is a live document and will be regularly reviewed, evaluated and updated to reflect changing circumstances.

Part 1 addresses how the Council will develop communication with residents and other stakeholders and Part 2 sets out how we communicate with employees.

The strategy is supported by the policies and guidance that make up our Communications Toolkit.

The Toolkit includes the:

- Media Policy
- Communications Protocol
- Media Relations Handbook
- Publications Handbook
- Plain English and writing style handbook
- Guidelines for using images
- Web handbook
- Advertising policies and procedures
- Corporate identity guidelines.
- Team Briefing handbook

3. SUMMARY

The Council faces increasing challenges in how it communicates with the local community.

The economic and political climate in which we are operating means we are undergoing a period of sustained change. The types of service we provide and how we provide them are likely to change, and this in turn means changes for our staff and customers.

We already suffer from poor customer satisfaction with the Council overall. While the latest research by the LGA and Ipsos MORI shows it is too simplistic to say this down to poor communication, there is no doubt that residents' perceptions of how well a council is providing value for money and how well informed residents feel about Council services, have a big impact on how satisfied they are overall. During this period of change we need to ensure residents know what we are doing and how we are prioritising our resources.

There are significant pressures on all budgets and savings in communications activities must be made across the Council. This means we need to improve audience targeting, ensure we are using the most effective communication channels for each audience and evaluate our activities to ensure they are being effective. It means focusing on campaigns that support the delivery of our priorities and that are aimed at eliciting behavioural or perception changes from identified audiences.

This strategy focuses on five theme priority areas for improving the Council's communications.

They are:

Keeping residents better informed

- Taking a planned and proactive approach to media relations
- Using well targeted and effective publications
- Promoting a strong and consistent visual identity

Delivering value for money, customer focused communications

- Auditing all communications activities across the Council to ensure they provide value and joining them up where possible.
- Carrying out a limited number of focused campaigns to deliver the City and Council priorities
- Joining up communications activities with our partners
- Improving the value of advertising

Providing fast and efficient online services

- Using new technology to create a transactional website
- Communicating customer service standards
- Promoting customer access channels
- Investigating opportunities to use social media to reach targeted communities

Promoting resident involvement

- Running an ongoing campaign to publicise opportunities for residents to get involved in council decision making
- Carrying out an ongoing 'you said, we did' campaign to demonstrate what has changed as a result of residents' feedback
- Developing and promoting online consultation tools
- Promoting the work of locality teams and publicising neighbourhood issues and meetings

Supporting staff in delivering excellent communications

- Embedding corporate communication standards and ensuring every employee understand their roles and responsibilities
- Promoting understanding of the corporate vision and priorities
- Developing methods for engaging staff
- Providing a range of corporate communications channels such as a staff newsletter and team briefings
- Using staff feedback to further develop the Staff Room intranet

4. STRATEGY

All communication activities carried out by the Council needs to have a clear purpose and be targeted at identified audiences. Any communication by the Council needs to do at least one the following:

- Inform residents about the services we provide and ensure the fullest take up of services and benefits
- Increase openness and transparency about how decisions are made and how money is being spent by the City Council
- Encourage community involvement in the Council's democratic and decision and policy making processes
- Enhance the City Council's reputation by promoting and celebrating its successes and achievements or protect it by challenging inaccurate and unfounded criticism about the Council
- Promote the quality of life and attractions in Plymouth to attract more people to visit and live and work in the city
- Promote the Council as a modern, innovative employer to attract and keep high quality staff
- Influence the perceptions of potential investors and help secure funding.

5. OUR COMMUNICATIONS PRINCIPLES

These principles are the basis of all communications activity by the Council. They reflect the requirements set out in 2010 draft Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity.

PLANNED AND PROACTIVE

We plan our communications activities to focus on the council's priorities and the needs of our audiences.

We always challenge the need for unplanned communication.

VALUE FOR MONEY

We always seek best value for money, which means all publicity has a clear purpose and takes account of the cost against anticipated result, the needs of the customer and matching the message to the audience.

EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS INFORMED

We always aim to ensure that members and employees are informed first about key issues.

OPEN AND TRUTHFUL

We never knowingly mislead the media or members of the public. We are open and transparent with information about the Council, its services and its policies as possible, while respecting confidentiality.

CLEAR

As a corporate member of the Plain English Campaign all communication, whether written or verbal, will be clear and easily understood. We don't publish information that is not in plain English and free of jargon.

CONSISTENT

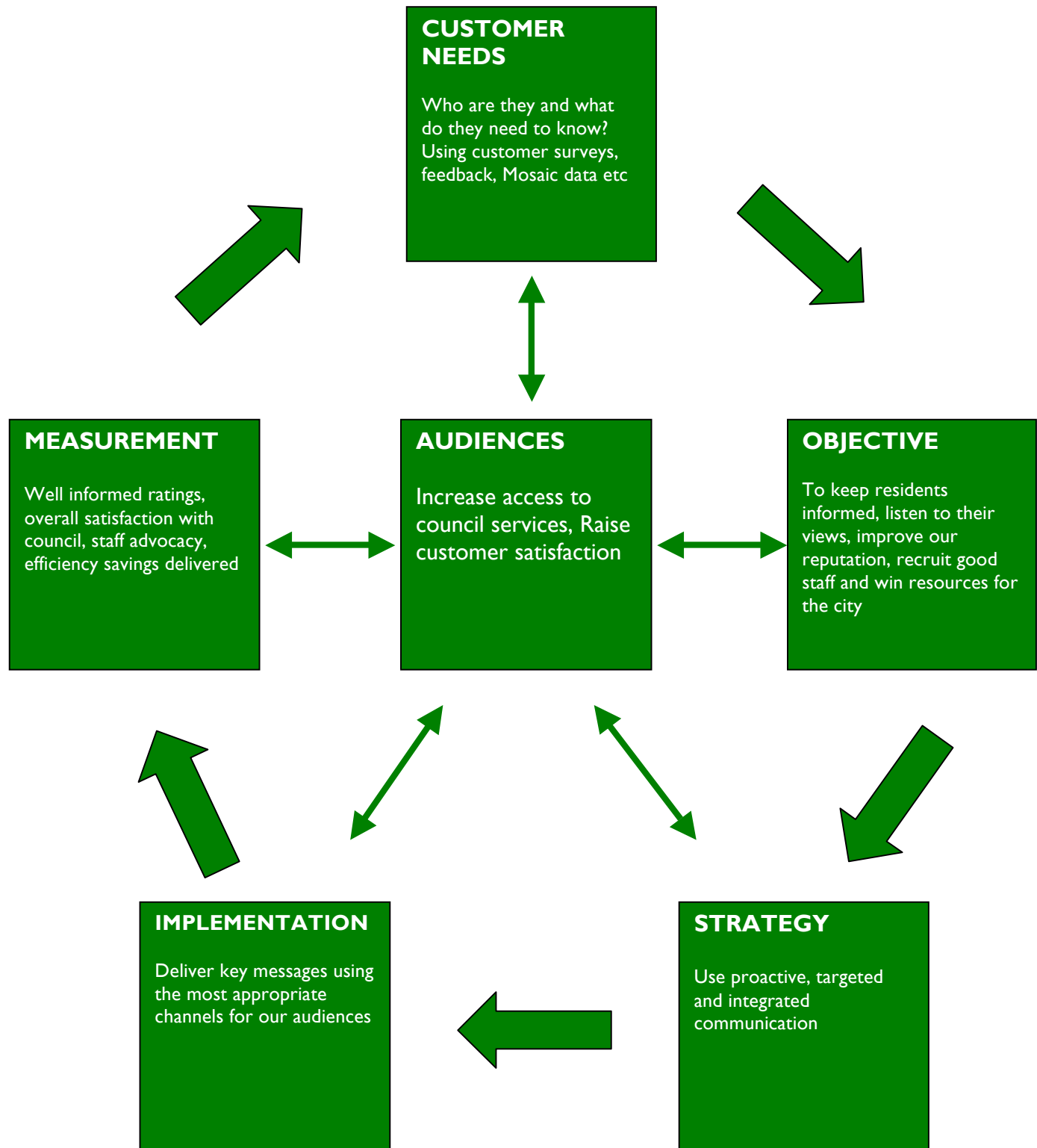
Communication by all Council services meets our corporate style and is clearly identified as coming from Plymouth City Council.

INCLUSIVE

We make all reasonable effort to take account of all our audiences and offer information in alternative formats or languages when appropriate.

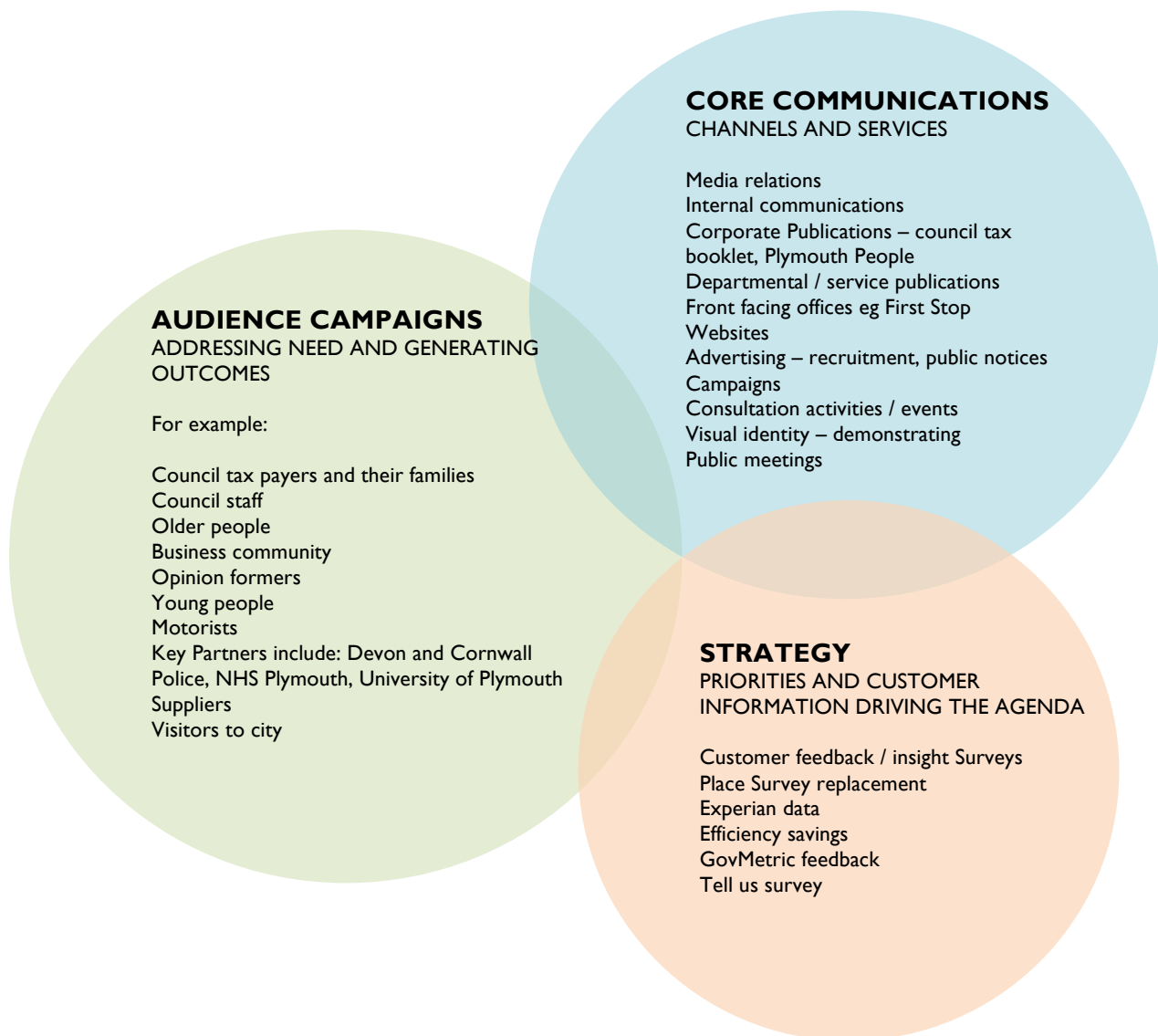
6. OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIONS

Our approach to communication begins and ends with our customers. We need to use information about our customers to inform our activities and use tailored messages delivered through a range of channels selected to suit the audience in question. We should evaluate outcomes and refine our methods accordingly.



7. KEY AUDIENCES AND DELIVERY CHANNELS

Our strategy can be segmented into three key areas as shown below. Clear strategy and customer insight from a variety of sources should underpin all our activity. Campaigns targeted at audiences need to achieve real outcomes.



8. KEY DRIVERS FOR OUR COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES

Our communications priorities, activities and targets are driven by:

- Budget pressures facing the Council and the need to make savings and demonstrate value for money.
- The city and corporate priorities. Effective communication is essential to the successful delivery of all our priorities.
- The current low customer satisfaction with the Council. There is solid evidence that effective communication about what a council is doing improves customer satisfaction. In Plymouth a low number of residents tell us they feel well informed about the Council and its partners. We aim to improve this by delivering the recommended activities in the Local Government Association's national Reputation Campaign.
- The changing shape of local government and the City Council – customers and staff will need to be informed about, and fully engaged in, changes to services and how they are delivered.
- The increasing number of services being delivered in partnership.
- Government directives to increase transparency in local government.
- The new draft Code of Recommended Practice on Local Government Publicity.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Better informed and more satisfied residents
- Higher take up of key services that will help deliver our priorities
- Reduced spend on communications activity across the Council and joined up and targeted communication activities that provide better value
- More transactions carried out on the website, reducing costs
- Better informed Council staff and partners.

9. DELIVERING THE CITY'S PRIORITIES

Our communications activities are focused on helping deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

ENCOURAGING GROWTH

CORE MESSAGE: We are working with our partners to create a wealthy city. We plan to expand Plymouth's economy by increasing the population from 252,800 to 300,000 (with an additional 50,000 in the surrounding area) by 2026 to achieve the critical mass to provide the range of amenities needed to become the regional economic hub of the far South West. This will attract more visitors, develop the cultural and retail and make Plymouth a more vibrant city.

Communications will help deliver by:

- Promoting Plymouth nationally with key influencers
- Promoting events locally and nationally
- Promoting Plymouth as an attractive and well managed place to visit through websites and publicity and events
- Using the Positively Plymouth branding to promote the best of the city and activities to ensure these messages are actively supported by the community

RAISING ASPIRATION

CORE MESSAGE: The Council is ambitious for Plymouth and the local community. We are working with our partners to create a wise city, which is a vital element of making Plymouth one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where all residents enjoy an outstanding quality of life. The Council is striving to be an 'excellent' organisation.

Communications will help deliver by:

- Promoting opportunities for local residents, including support for business start ups
- Promoting learning opportunities for all ages, including adult learning
- Celebrating success – of our young people, adult learners, business start ups etc.
- Promoting the city's ambition – eg. World Cup Host City, Life Centre
- Strong internal communications activities

REDUCING INEQUALITIES

CORE MESSAGE: The Council is working with its partners to create a healthy and a safe city and aims to reduce the inequalities in health, crime, educational attainment and housing quality in the city.

Communications will help deliver by:

- Promoting opportunities to take part in low cost sport and leisure activities
- Promoting health messages to targeted audiences aimed eg reducing smoking, promoting healthy eating and reducing obesity; increasing physical activity.

VALUE FOR COMMUNITIES

CORE MESSAGE: The Council is making the best possible use of all resources to deliver the best quality services that reflect the needs and aspirations of people in Plymouth. This means keeping them informed, listening and acting on what we are told and championing residents' interests.

Communications will help deliver by:

- Involving residents in priority, budget and service delivery and telling residents how we have responded.
- Championing the interests of local residents eg. Naval base campaign, consumer protection messages.
- Demonstrating how we are improving the environment
- Encouraging community pride in the environment by reporting litter graffiti, encouraging communities to take part in cleanup initiatives, providing visible street cleaning services, demonstrating how we are tackling anti-social behaviour
- Showing how the Council is using its resources and performing by publicising spending, engagement activities, being visible in the community and having a strong and consistently applied visual identity.

PRIORITY 1: KEEPING RESIDENTS BETTER INFORMED

This is a priority because: Residents' satisfaction with the Council is lower than average. People are much happier with individual services than they are with the Council overall. There is strong evidence that this is due in large part to the relatively low number of residents who think the Council provides value for money and who feel informed about the Council.

We will achieve this priority by:

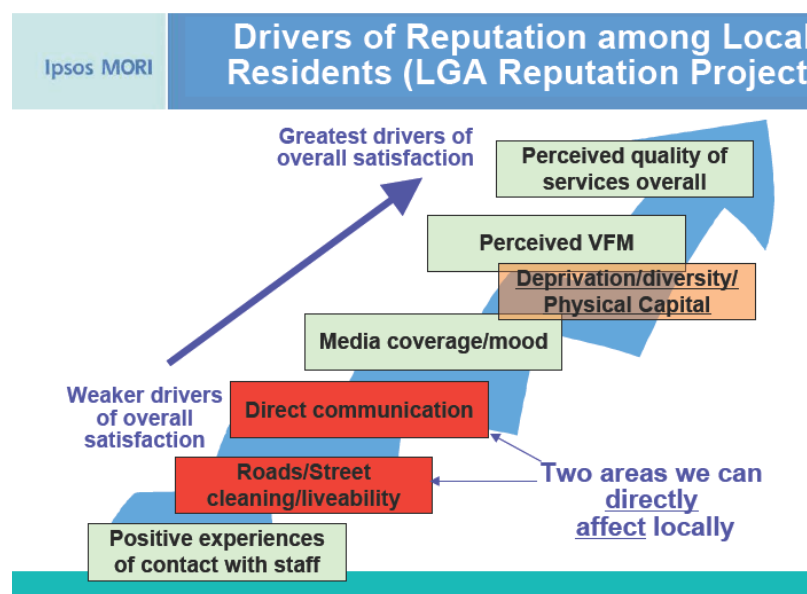
- Taking a planned and proactive approach to media relations
- Using well targeted and effective publications
- Promoting a strong and consistent visual identity

Research consistently shows that good communication leads to more effective services, a better reputation, stronger relationships and ultimately to higher customer satisfaction.

A decade of research by Ipsos MORI shows that if residents feel informed about what their council does and feel it provides value for money, they are more likely to be satisfied with it overall.

There are also a range of factors about the local area that influence satisfaction levels, including the level of managerial and professional occupations, deprivation, ethnic diversity, the number of young people, population churn, living conditions, region and urbanity (urban areas surrounded by rural areas).

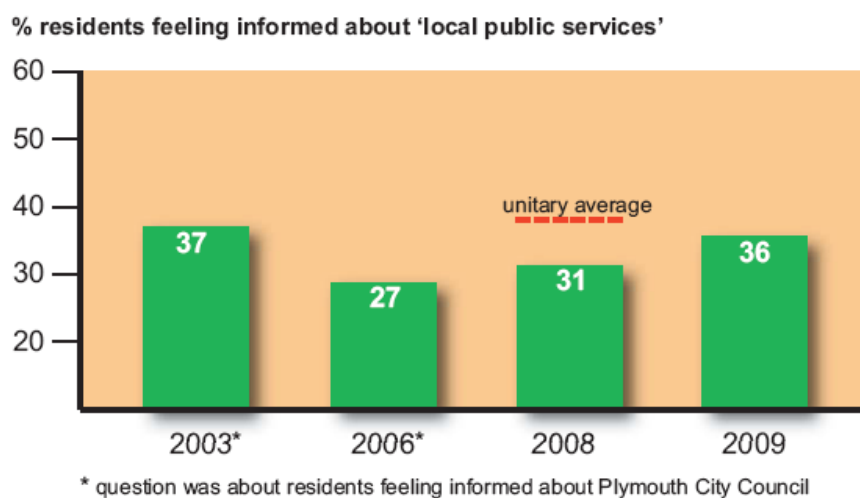
However, direct communication is one of the key areas affecting satisfaction that the Council can directly influence. Media coverage also has a significant impact.



HOW WELL INFORMED ARE OUR RESIDENTS?

The 2008 Place Survey showed that 30 per cent of Plymouth residents are satisfied with the Council overall compared to a national average of 45 per cent.

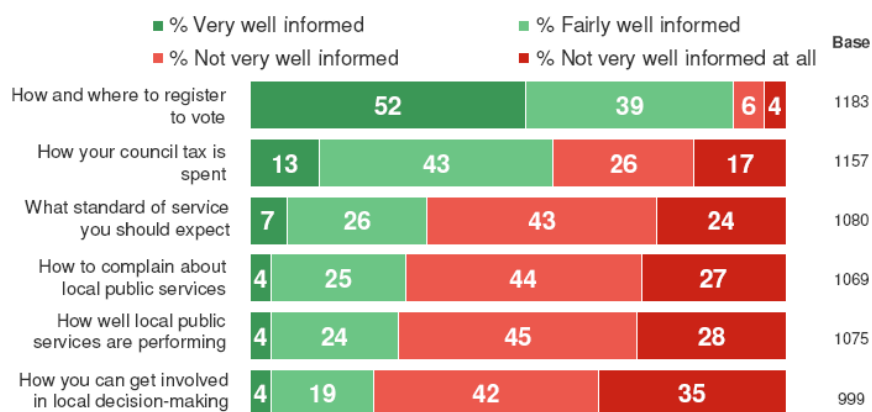
In Plymouth 20 per cent feel the Council provides value for money and 36 per cent say they feel well informed about the Council and its services. These are below the average for unitary authorities. If the Council is to drive up customer satisfaction it is vital it demonstrates value for money in everything it does and that this is reflected in the way it communicates.



Residents feel better informed on some issues than others, with most residents knowing how and where to vote and the fewest about how to get involved in local decision making – an area that needs to be improved.

Being informed about key issues/ services

Q12 How well informed do you feel about each of the following?



REPUTATION CAMPAIGN

The Local Government Association (LGA) launched a national Reputation Campaign in 2005 in response to the dramatic decline in residents' satisfaction with councils despite rises in performance.

To address the issue that people value their local council far less than the services it provides, the LGA and MORI identified 12 core actions that, when delivered well, have a marked and positive impact on a council's reputation.

The core actions were into two broad categories. Seven actions were about providing a clean and safe local environment through a highly visible, strongly branded council cleaning operation, effective, cleaning and maintenance contracts, one phone number for the public to report local environmental problems, dealing with 'grot spots', removing abandoned vehicles within 24 hours, winning a Green Flag award for at least one park and protecting the environment.

The recommended communications activities were:

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

Plymouth City Council has been implementing the communications actions recommended in this campaign. However, the campaign only had a limited impact, both in Plymouth and nationally. The 2008 Place Survey data showed that overall satisfaction with councils is still declining despite better performance and better communication.

It is clear that good communications is not enough and that a far more complex range of factors influence council reputations. However, a reputation index that ranked councils' reputations after taking into account the main local economic and demographic factors that help determine a council's reputation, shows Plymouth is still performing in the bottom quartile nationally.

A new Reputation Campaign launched in 2010 recommends councils continue to improve communication and to focus on:

- demonstrating value for money
- informing and engaging residents and staff
- building trust and confidence
- demonstrating how key services are being improved
- showing how lives are being changed for the better.

“Value for money is the most powerful driver for overall council satisfaction. It can explain over eighty per cent of the variation in overall council satisfaction.”

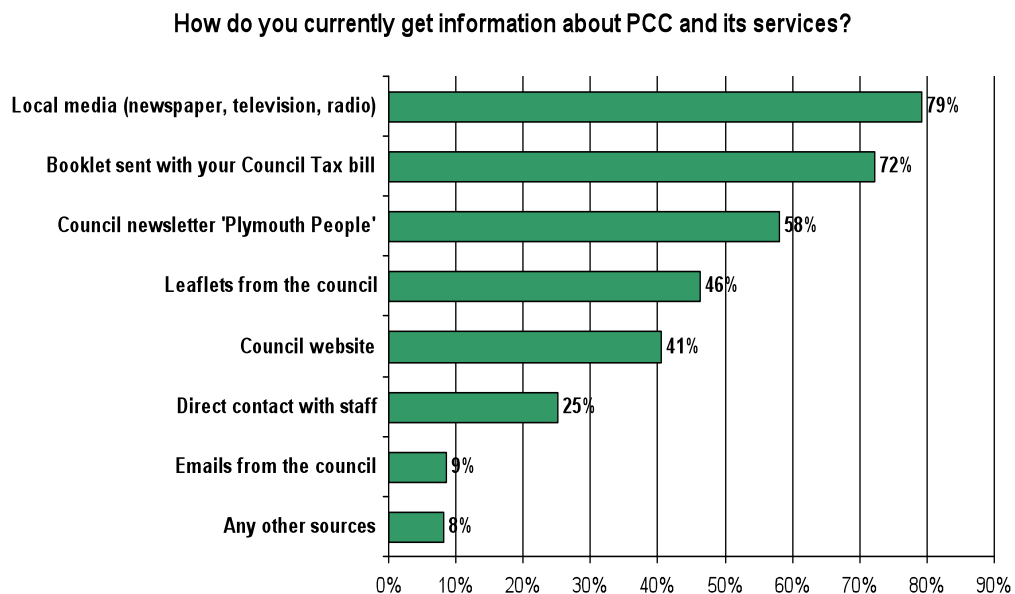
Reputation Index Report, February 2010
(The Research Unit, February 2010)

HOW RESIDENTS GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The way residents get information about the Council is changing. While the media remains the most popular way of getting information, its impact is reducing.

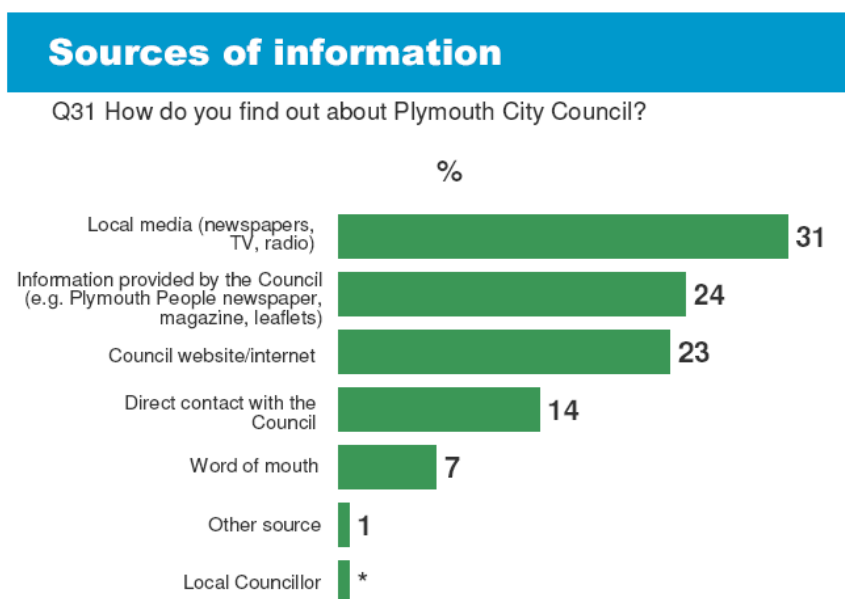
How do you find out about Plymouth City Council %			
	2006	2008	Difference
Local media	43	31	-12
Information provided by the council, including Plymouth People	17	24	+7
Council website	14	23	+9
Direct contact with council	8	14	+6
Word of mouth	9	7	-1
Local councillor		1	
Other		1	

A survey of our Citizen's Panel shows that residents get information from a variety of sources, with publications produced by the Council remaining more important than online information or direct contact with staff.



A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO MEDIA RELATIONS

The media remains one of the main methods for communicating with the Council's audiences, particularly local residents, and is important in determining its reputation. While there was a 12 per cent decline in the number of residents saying the local media is their main source of information about the Council between the 2006 and the 2008 Place Survey, (from 43% to 31%) it is still the most popular source of information.



The Council aims to work in partnership with the media to ensure important messages are communicated fairly and accurately to local residents and other stakeholders. This means taking a proactive approach to briefing the media on important issues and making sure Council representatives are available for interview on these issues.

A corporate approach

The Council takes a corporate approach to media relations to ensure there is a consistent and efficient service. Corporate Communications issue information to the local, regional and national media and handle all non-political media enquiries. All media enquiries, releases and resulting coverage are all logged on a Newsflash database that is used to monitor performance.

Media enquiries

The Council receives around 3,700 media enquiries a year and aims to provide fast and accurate responses in order to minimise inaccurate reporting. Media enquiries are logged, which enables the unit to monitor its performance in both reactive and proactive media work, by linking it to the resulting coverage.

Press releases

The Communications team issues all press releases on behalf of the Council and concentrates on quality of information rather than quantity of releases. The target is for 95 per cent use of all releases by at least two local media outlets. Releases are also published on the Council's website.

Monitoring of local media coverage shows that 85 per cent of all positive media coverage of the Council is the direct result of press releases. The target is to increase the number of press releases issued from 670 to 700 a year, while maintaining the percentage used. This will be achieved by Corporate Communications working with services to ensure they are more proactive in identifying relevant content for releases.

National media

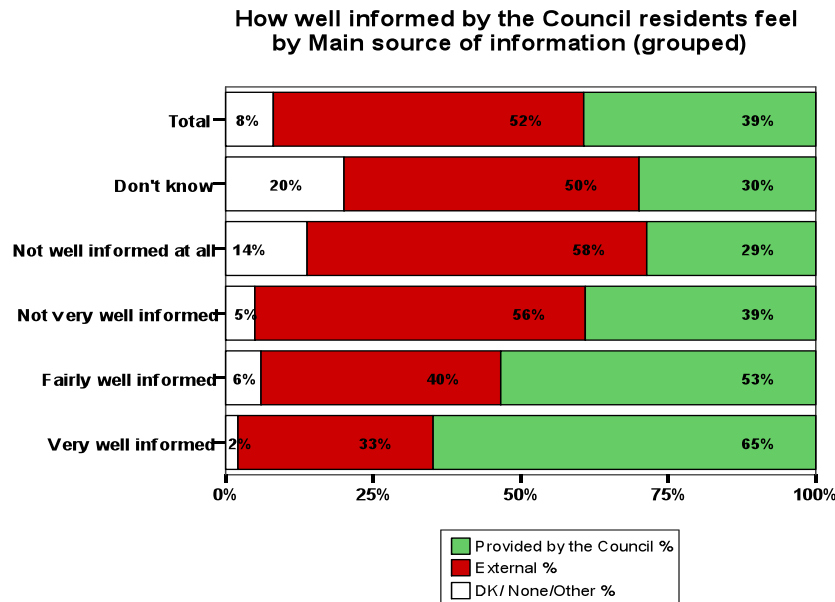
The national media, including the specialist press, is also an important method for promoting Plymouth City Council to key stakeholders such as potential partners, investors and funders. It is also an important method for raising the City Council's profile as a potential employer and promoting the delivery of the vision for the city. Our target is to achieve 24 positive stories about Plymouth City Council in the national media each year.

MEDIA RELATIONS PRORITIES

- Increase the number of media releases issued and used by the local media
- Achieve a minimum of 24 stories a year in the national media that support one or more of the council's priorities
- Take a proactive approach to media relations by ensuring all departments have annual service communications plans based on service and corporate priorities
- Provide a minimum of two media training sessions for officers and members a year, targeting priority areas and ensuring all key service areas have senior managers able to carry out media interviews

TARGETED AND EFFECTIVE PUBLICATIONS

Publications are one of the main channels for communicating information directly with our customers. The importance of effective publications is demonstrated by surveys, which show that those residents who feel most informed about the Council and its services are those who receive their information direct from their Council.



2008 Place Survey

Plymouth People

The City Council has produced Plymouth People in various formats for more than 15 years. Since 2002 it has been produced as a tabloid newspaper delivered between four and eight times a year. Each edition is currently delivered to around 85,000 households. Another 5,000 copies are distributed through libraries and in Council buildings.

The newspaper includes information about how the Council is performing and spending its money, how people can access services, councilor contact details and information about upcoming consultation exercises. Space is offered to partners and features show how the council is working with the police and health service.

There are currently weaknesses and gaps in the distribution of Plymouth, which need to be addressed.

In October 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued a draft revised Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority, which proposed a limit on four Council newspapers/magazines a year in order to prevent potential unfair competition with local newspapers.

The aim in 2011/12 is to publish Plymouth People in a magazine format four times a year, distributed to all households. The aim will be to achieve maximum value for money by including information currently published in separate leaflets and to include

information from partners. The magazine format will encourage residents to keep it for longer as a reference on council services.

Council Tax booklet

The Council Tax booklet is one of the most important public documents produced by the Council, as it is the only one that is posted to every household with information that they have to open. It is an effective means of explaining what the council is spending its money on and how it is performing.

For the last three years it has included an A to Z guide of Council services in order to make it more useful to residents and to demonstrate the range of services they are receiving.

Residents were significantly more informed about how the council spends its money than they were in 2006. The aim is to continue to improve how spending and performance information is presented.

Corporate standards

A Communications Toolkit was published in 2005 to help ensure council publications represent good value by ensuring they are targeted at appropriate audiences, have a clear purpose, are informative, well written and designed, properly branded and are distributed effectively. The aim is also to maximize opportunities to join up information between departments.

A corporate Style and Plain English handbook has been produced to enable staff to produce better publications. All corporate publications are expected to meet minimum Plain English standards.

Staff involved in producing key publications have received training from the Plain English Campaign and this will continue. A specialist course for web writers has also been held. Corporate guidance on writing and house style is available to staff from the Corporate Communications Unit, which checks important public documents before publication.

Budget pressures make it important that the Council further reduces the number of publications produced improves the targeting of information to meet the needs of audiences.

PUBLICATIONS PRORITIES

- Produce Plymouth People in a magazine format four times a year and improve distribution to ensure it reaches as many Plymouth residents as possible
- Produce an annual Council Tax and Performance Summary booklet distributed to all Plymouth households, clearly setting out how the Council is spending its budget and how it is performing
- To provide plain English training to all officers involved in producing regular publications
- Submit 10 key documents for a Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark (such as the Corporate Plan, Annual Report and Council Tax booklet)
- Ensure all departmental publications are identified in service publicity plans and meet the minimum quality standards as set out in the Communications Toolkit.

A STRONG AND CONSISTENT VISUAL IDENTITY

One of the key elements of the national local government Reputation Campaign is to ensure councils brand their services properly so their customers can see what they do. If residents don't know what they pay their taxes for, they will not feel they are getting value for money and will not be satisfied with their council.

The Council introduced new corporate identity guidelines as part of the Communications Toolkit in 2005 but the rapid emergence of new partnerships and inconsistent use by some service areas means the Council currently still does not brand some of its high profile services well.

A review of the Council's visual identity aims to save money by ensuring the use of one clear identity and addressing the potential confusion caused by the increasing number of Council services that are now delivered in partnership with other organisations.

VISUAL IDENTITY PRIORITIES

- Publish updated visual identity guidelines and communicate to all services.
- Implement an approvals process to ensure all services follow the visual identity guidelines

PRIORITY 2: DELIVERING BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY COMMUNICATIONS

This is a priority because: the Council has to deliver substantial efficiency savings over the next three years and spending on communications activities will be reduced. This means the Council needs to communicate better with significantly fewer resources. The aim is to deliver ambitious savings targets in communications activities across the authority.

We will achieve this priority by:

- Auditing all communications activities across the Council to ensure they provide value and joining them up where possible.
- Carrying out a limited number of focused campaigns annually to deliver the City and Council priorities
- Joining up communications activities with our partners
- Improving the value of advertising

AUDITING COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

The Corporate Communications service will support departments in ensuring all communication is planned, has a clear purpose and uses the best channels for the target audience. A corporate approval process will prevent money being spent on communications activities that do not represent good value for money. The aim will be to join up activities across departments and partner organizations wherever possible.

FOCUSED CAMPAIGNS TO DELIVER PRIORITIES

Campaigns are a series of communications activities with a common objective and theme, with the aim of influence and change the target audience's behaviour or perceptions.

With resources being increasingly limited we need to focus our communications resources on proactive and planned activities that will directly influence one or more of the council's key priorities.

Each year we will agree in advance a maximum of 10 key campaigns a year aimed at delivering real outcomes. These will be aimed at specific, identified audiences and have clear outcomes.

The campaigns will be supported at high level and have clear goals and an imperative to achieve real change.

The targeted campaigns will increase the relevancy of information our audiences receive as well as the efficiency with which we deliver it. The aim will be to join up existing communication activity wherever possible.

The campaigns for 2011/12 will be developed in consultation with service departments as business plans are written to reflect the Council's new priorities.

Campaigns could be focused on areas such as helping reduce health inequalities through stop smoking campaigns or promoting healthy living; promoting the city to internal and external audiences using the Positively Plymouth branding or a corporate 'you said, we did' campaign to feedback on changes resulting from customer feedback

JOINED UP COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR PARTNERS

Effective communication between the Council and its partners is vital if it is to help deliver the city's priorities. More services are also being delivered in partnership and our internal stakeholders and customers need to know what our priorities are, how we will be delivering them and what role they can have in developing them.

It is important that partners in Plymouth present a consistent and compelling story to local, national and international stakeholders about the city's journey to becoming one of Europe's most vibrant, waterfront cities.

Key stakeholders include local, regional and national opinion formers, including MPs, civil servants, government offices, businesses, the voluntary sector and other local authorities.

Corporate Communications needs to work closely with the communications teams in partner organisations to deliver shared messages and support the shared objectives.

PARTNERS COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES

- Produce stakeholder communications plan, mapping existing channels used by the Council and its partners to communicate and identify new opportunities to integrate where possible
- To work with partners on a programme of internal and external communications about joint initiatives and priorities using Council communications channels such as Plymouth People, the website and Staff Room
- Set up a regular Plymouth partner communications forum to share information and to forward plan
- Produce an e-newsletter for partners to inform that of issues affecting the Council's and its work in delivering the shared objectives for the city.

IMPROVING THE VALUE OF ADVERTISING

Paid for advertising can also be a valuable part of the communications mix in campaigns aimed at behaviour or perception change. The Council is required by Government to use paid for advertising to notify the public about issues such as changes to the highway network. There can be significant costs involved and it is vital that all paid for advertising is properly researched and appropriate media are used to target specific messages at identified audiences.

The contract for an agency to handle all the Council's recruitment and non-recruitment advertising was retendered in 2009. Guidance for non-recruitment advertising has been produced to ensure all non-recruitment advertising is providing value for money by getting key messages to target audiences. Significant savings have been made through the new contract and internal procedures for advertising.

Corporate Communications will work with all Council departments and the Council's advertising agency to ensure all paid for advertising is targeted, good value and effective.

ADVERTISING PRIORITIES

- Minimise Council spending on non recruitment advertising through a corporate approvals process
- Ensure service publicity plans include all plans to use paid for advertising to help ensure all advertising is properly targeted at appropriate audiences and that opportunities for savings are identified.
- Work with the Council's advertising agency Seek new ways of reducing advertising costs, including using more online advertising for statutory notices and reducing the size of adverts where possible.

PRIORITY 3: PROVIDING FAST AND EFFICIENT ONLINE SERVICES

This is a priority because: Effective communication that anticipates the information needs of customers and a well structured, transactional website play a crucial role in driving up customer satisfaction. Information and services need to be provided in ways that make sense for customers rather than any internal structures. An increasing number of customers expect to be able to use the internet to interact with the Council quickly and easily and at times convenient to them. The Council's existing website provides limited customer interactions and some services are still not available online.

We will achieve this priority by:

- Using new technology to create a transactional website that is accessible to a wide range of mobile
- Communicating customer service standards
- Promoting customer access channels
- Investigating opportunities to use social media to reach targeted communities

CREATING A TRANSACTIONAL WEBSITE

If customers are proactively provided with clear information about services and are able to receive services through the website there will be less need for them to phone or visit the Council.

The efficiency of websites compared to other channels is now well established. Socitm's Better Connected 2009 report cites benchmarking showing the big differences in costs between different customer access channels:

CHANNEL	COST
Face to face visits	£6.56 per visit
Phone calls	£3.22 per call
Websites cost	27p per visitor

Customers need to feel confident that if they make contact with the Council over electronic channels such as an online form or by email they will receive the same – if not better – level of response as they would if they had made contact through any other method.

This means that online services need to be reliable and wherever possible customers need to be able to complete their transaction from start to finish without the need to make contact with the council through any other means.

Use of the internet

The internet is increasingly the default channel of information for many people. In Plymouth more than 64 per cent of households have high speed broadband. Free internet access is available in libraries.

A Plymouth Points of View survey carried out in 2009 showed a higher level of internet use by panel members, with 73% saying they had access to the internet. However, there were very significant differences in ownership between age groups:

	18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
Yes	75%	96%	94%	93%	81%	65%	36%	22%	0%

The number of people using the Council's website has increased dramatically in recent years, reflecting the rapid increase in PC ownership and the expansion of broadband.

Page hits on the Council's website	
2005	4,780,000
2006	7,074,999
2007	9,200,000
2008	14,007,662
2009	13,577,894

This growth in use has been supported by significant improvements to the website led by the Web Team, which coordinates a network of web authors around the Council.

The 2008 Place Survey showed an increase of nine per cent since 2006 in the number of people saying the website was their main means for finding out about the City Council.

The number of page hits on the Council's site leveled off in 2009, partly due to the growth of RSS feeds for news and jobs, which means users do not have to directly access the site as the information is sent to them automatically.

Website performance

The Council's website was recognised as being 'transactional' for the first time in the 2008 Socitm annual survey of local authority websites. This was a significant improvement from the Content + status in 2007. The site scored well for use of the A to Z, use of search facility and navigation.

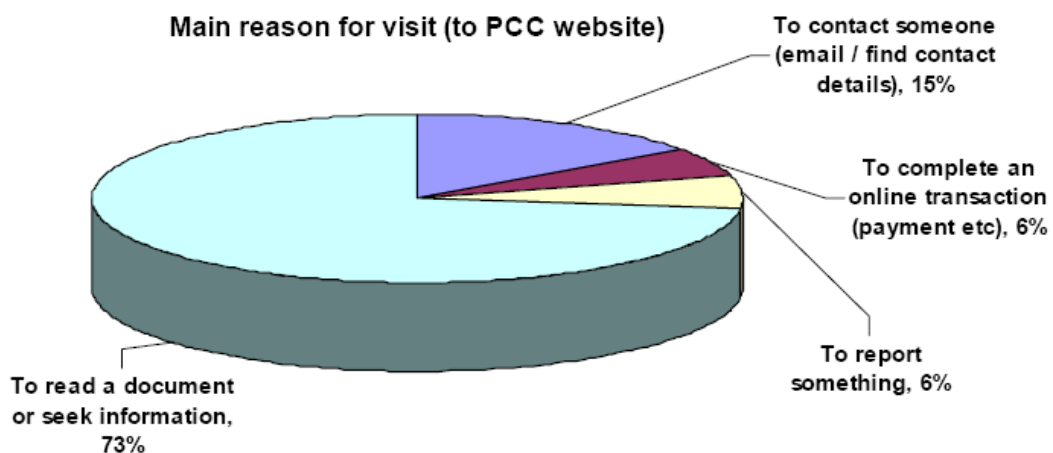
However, the 2009 Socitm survey highlighted a number of issues with the site and it failed a number of the customer scenarios. An action plan was drawn up to address these weaknesses, some of which require technical solutions from ICT, some updated content from web authors based in services and some action by the Web Team.

The website is still rated as 'transactional' (the ability for members of the public to complete online transactions). The site scored strongly on 'news value' (press releases) and fairly strongly in the small business scenario and in using the search engine to locate documents.

Customer feedback

A Plymouth Points of View survey carried out in July 2009 showed 46% of respondents had visited the Council's website in the last 12 months.

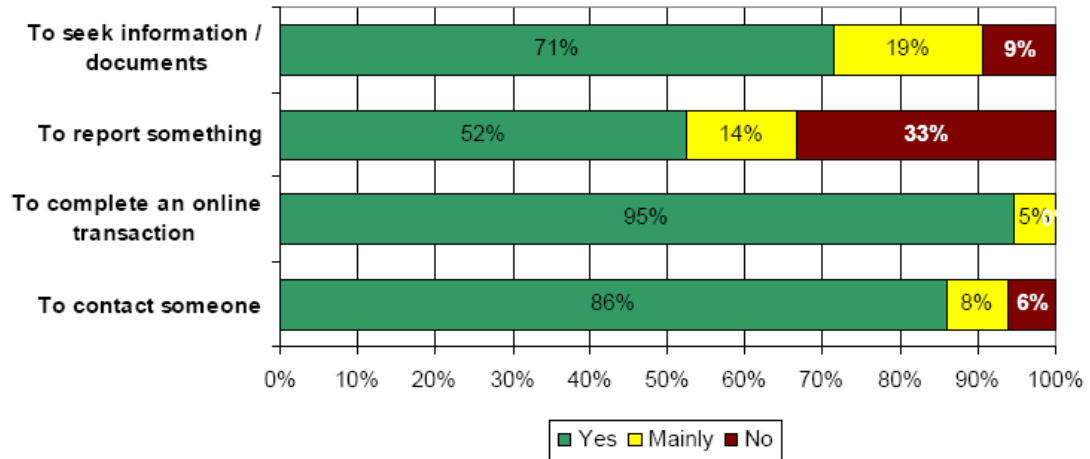
Elderly respondents (65+) were much less likely to have visited the website, while 65% of those aged 25 to 34 said they had.



The reasons given for visiting the website clearly demonstrates that Plymouth City Council's website remains primarily a one-way communications channel and its potential to improve two-way communication with residents is not being exploited.

It is also clear that the website is failing many people who try and use it to report something to the Council. Respondents were most successful when completing an online transaction (95%), or finding someone (86%), but least successful when trying to report something (52%).

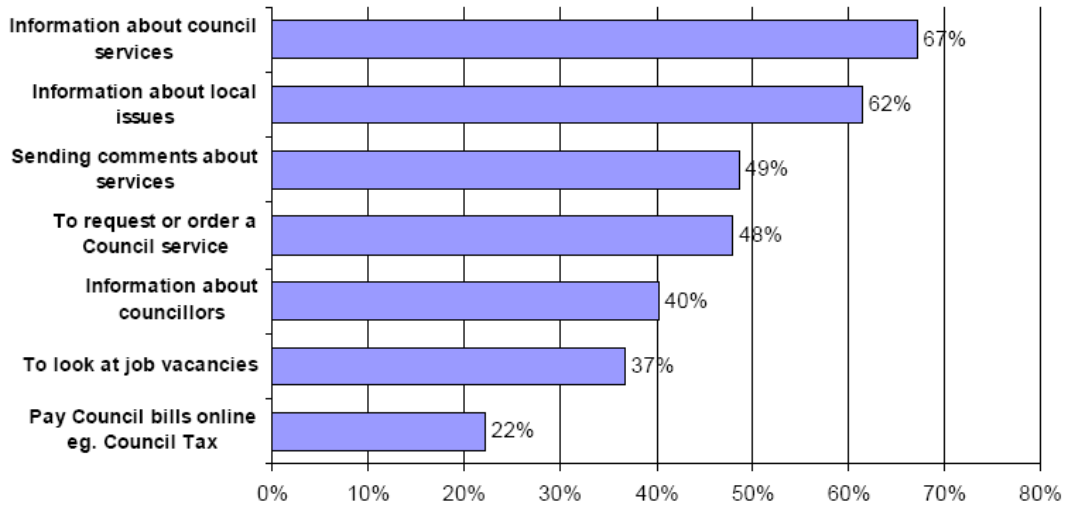
'Reason for visit' by 'Found what was required'



Demand for web services

The survey demonstrated a demand for transactional services, with just under half saying they would use the site for request or order a council service.

Would use PCC website in the future for:



Promoting use of the Council's website

To encourage greater use of online services and consultations, the Council needs to promote available online transactions through an ongoing marketing campaign. This will use a mix of posters, branding and advertising.

The site also needs to provide a more compelling user experience to encourage visits by residents of all ages and backgrounds and it needs to provide information and resources that cannot be easily found elsewhere.

Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of respondents to a national survey carried out by Webs Edge said they wanted to use their council websites to post their own videos or photos of graffiti and other anti-social behaviour and 64 per cent said they would prefer councils to provide visual communication such as video clips or photos, combined with text. The web team will encourage Council services to use these opportunities wherever possible. This will help attract more online visitors and help promote Plymouth as a vibrant waterfront city both to local residents and to potential visitors and investors.

Measuring performance

We will measure our performance of our web activity through:

- Website statistics, including number of payments, bookings and forms
- Surveys and residents' panel consultations.
- Site Morse website testing software which analyses our accessibility compliance, technical compliance and identify where errors exist.
- The annual Socitm Report
- GovMetric data (In conjunction with First Stop and the Call Centre, the website features a Govmetric feedback option. All comments are passed to the relevant department and members of the public are contacted to tell them what has been done as a result of their comment)

WEBSITE PRIORITIES

- Use new technology to develop a website that is more efficient to maintain and update and enables more user friendly, interactive features
- Increase online transactions such as the number of applications, bookings and payments that are made through the site and expand the number of ways this can be done, such as reporting issues to the council by using interactive maps
- Transform existing online content so it is more focused on the needs of customers
- Use the Council's website to better promote the city to local residents and visitors through initiatives such as Positively Plymouth and better events promotion

Social media

It is no longer good enough to simply 'send stuff out' through tried and tested communication channels and hope that the messages stick.

There are currently over 100 million different blogs, 400 million Facebook members and millions of people using Twitter. People are creating their own communities of interest, creating content about organisations and having conversations about them which they have no control over.

People also trust in different ways. Information about the Council is much more likely to be believed if it comes from a source that is emotionally close to the recipient – family, friends, work colleagues etc – than directly from us.

While there are risks for local authorities using social media, it does provide opportunities to engage specific audiences and to communicate in ways they are most comfortable with. We are currently using Twitter to send news and jobs information to people who choose to follow the Council. We are also using it to send information about the Life Centre to people who sign up for it.

It is important that the Council continues to expand the way it uses social media in a controlled and focused way in order to ensure it is not excluding significant numbers of local residents or missing opportunities for two-way engagement with many local residents.

Promoting access channels

The Council needs to tell customers which services it provides and how and when they can access them.

To do this it needs to know who its customers are, how they prefer to access different services and to use communication channels that are appropriate for the lifestyles and preferences of each audience.

Proactive communication can help reduce avoidable contact with the Council. This means predicting customer information needs.

PRIORITIES FOR PROMOTING ACCESS CHANNELS

- Provide information on how people can access key services using customer data to target this through the most relevant channels
- Regularly consult customers on the effectiveness of the Council's website in meeting their information needs about services (eg through Residents' Panel and online surveys) and collate customer data (eg Experian) to target identified audiences
- Run an ongoing publicity campaign to promote the availability of online transactions and services

PRIORITY 4: PROMOTING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

This is a priority because: The Council needs to improve the way it enables people to influence decisions as currently only 22 per cent of residents in Plymouth feel they can influence decisions in their local area (Place Survey 2008). This is a national problem and it is getting worse. How much residents feel they can influence local decision-making is an important factor in determining overall satisfaction with a council.

We will achieve this priority by:

- Running an ongoing campaign to publicise opportunities for residents to have their say about council decisions
- Carrying out an ongoing 'you said, we did' campaign to demonstrate what has changed as a result of residents' feedback
- Developing and promoting online consultation tools
- Promoting the work of locality teams and publicising neighbourhood issues and meetings

Successful organisations know what their customers feel about them and involve them in shaping their services. It not only makes good business sense but there is now a legal duty on councils to do so under Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.

The act imposed a duty on all local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out 'any of its functions' by providing information, consulting or 'involving in another way'.

Councils must consult a balanced selection of the individuals, groups, businesses or organisations it considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, its function. They must not discriminate in the way they inform, consult or involve local people. They must promote equal opportunities for people to engage and get involved.

The Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides the framework for how the Council and partners will engage Plymouth residents and stakeholders in a constructive dialogue to help improve the quality and value of services, plan the future of the city, strengthen local democracy, develop policy and plan services.

The Council's aim is for consultation initiatives to:

- Be joined up wherever possible and deliver good value for money
- Be well publicised, with clear information provided
- Provide feedback to participants so they can see how their comments have had an influence
- Ensure that small neighbourhoods are not overlooked and involvement is designed to suit the needs of those neighbourhoods
- Use a variety of methods to ensure people have a choice to respond in different ways

Locality working provides opportunities to engage local residents on neighbourhood issues that matter most to them. It will be important for the Council to work with its partners to publicise the activities of neighbourhood teams, promote how residents can get involved and report on what actions are being taken.

PRIORITIES FOR PROMOTING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

- Promote consultation exercises and feed back on the action taken as a result, including the Local Development Framework, transport consultations, budget consultations etc
- Develop online consultation tools on the Council's website to encourage greater participation in consultation exercises
- Carry out an ongoing 'You said, we did' campaign proving feedback on changes made as a result of residents views
- Conduct an ongoing campaign to promote the work of locality teams and publicise neighbourhood issues and meetings

11. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

This strategy takes account of the following

People, Perceptions and Place, Ipsos MORI, June 2008

Commission for Communications, LG Communications, Sept 2008

Review of Council spending on communication with the public, Audit Commission 2009

12th benchmarking report, Public PR benchmarking group, 2010

New Reputation Guide, Local Government Association / LG Communications 2010

Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity consultation document, Department for Communities and Local Government 2010

Reputation Index Report, February 2010 (The Research Unit, February 2010)

Proving communications work – the impact of council publications, LG Communications

The Commission on Competencies for Senior Communications Roles, LG Communications

The Reputation of Local Government: research study conducted for the LGA, 2008

Chief Executive's Challenge Report, LG Communications, 2008

IDeA Connecting with Communities Toolkit

LG07 Study, Karian and Box, 2007

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (draft)

Part 2: Internal communications



12. PRIORITY 5: SUPPORTING STAFFING IN DELIVERING EXCELLENT INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

This is a priority because: We cannot achieve excellent performance without excellent internal communication. Councils that perform well have employees who feel well informed and therefore feel involved in their organisation and understand its objectives.

Effective internal communication will help:

- Create a 'can-do' culture and build a committed and high-performing workforce focused on achieving the council's goals
- Boost morale and motivation
- Encourage staff to be ambassadors
- The organisation to learn as staff are a vital source of information and ideas
- Provide a better customer service – informed frontline and other staff will be up to speed on what's happening in the council and why.

Good internal communication is also an essential element of building an organisation's reputation. Ipsos MORI's research shows that if employees are kept well informed they are more likely to act as advocates for the organisation they work for without being prompted.

There is evidence that in all these areas, Plymouth City Council should be performing better. The 2007 staff survey highlighted a number of areas for improvement. For example, half of respondents said they would tell people the Council was a good place to work, 28 per cent said managers were open and honest in communications, while 34 per cent felt they could challenge the way things are done.

How we will achieve it:

- Embedding corporate communication standards and ensuring every employee understand their roles and responsibilities
- Promoting understanding of the corporate vision and priorities
- Developing methods for engaging staff
- Providing a range of corporate communications channels such as a staff newsletter and team briefings
- Using staff feedback to further develop the Staff Room intranet

OUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AIMS

Our key internal communication objectives are to:

- Establish strong, two-way communication with our staff to create an informed, valued workforce, which is motivated to deliver improving services
- Ensure staff understanding of, and commitment to, the City Council's vision, values and priorities
- Provide staff with the tools and information they need to perform their roles efficiently
- Help the Council develop a strong employer brand which staff identify with, feel part of the whole organisation and act corporately as ambassadors for the Council

What excellent communications will look like

We will know we are achieving excellence in communication when all managers understand their roles and responsibilities for communicating with their staff and have been trained in how to do this effectively. They will understand our corporate standards and are appraised on how well they are delivering them.

Senior managers will treat employee communications as a priority and they set the communications standards and style for the organisation. They will be visible and accessible to employees at all levels. They will 'walk the floor' and spend more time speaking to staff and customers than in meetings.

Effective communication by managers will mean all staff regularly have appraisals and one-to-one sessions and are clear about how their roles deliver the service and corporate priorities. Staff will always receive their monthly corporate and local service team briefings and feel confident that their views will be passed back to senior management. They will always get feedback on whether any action is going to be taken as a result.

All employees will have access to the information they need to do their jobs effectively and are clear about the council's goals and priorities. They will have access to communication channels such as the intranet and a staff newsletter, which they find useful and informative.

The effective two-way communication between staff and managers will be reflected in staff surveys, which will be held a minimum of every two years. They will show that staff feel valued and that their views are listened to and acted on. Benchmarking with other local authorities will show there is a higher than average number of staff speaking highly of the council as a place to work.

All employees will be aware of the Council's standards on communication and know what they can expect from their managers.

They will understand that communication is a two way process and that they have a responsibility to take part in the development of their service's business plans and an active part in staff consultation exercises and events such as staff conferences.

They will also be aware of their own responsibilities for ensuring they access information about the Council and its policies and priorities. They will have easy access to this information, which is also given to them during their inductions.

OUR STANDARDS

Many examples of good practice already exist in Plymouth City Council. This framework sets out our *minimum* standards expected from every section of the organisation.

Each employee will:

- Have an annual appraisal with their line manager
- Have a six monthly performance review on an individual or team basis
- Attend a team meeting once a month to ask questions and receive corporate and service information from their line manager
- Have access to a corporate newsletter at least once a month
- Be able to make comments and suggestions through the Staff Suggestion Scheme
- Be consulted through staff surveys carried out a minimum of once every two years
- Have an opportunity to attend a staff conference at least once a year
- Have regular face to face contact with their line manager

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Council has introduced a framework aimed at improving internal communications. The results of the 2007 staff survey show that these standards are not embedded throughout the Council.

The 2010 staff survey will help us assess what progress we have made since then.

Staff Survey 2007 – communications issues

	PLYMOUTH	BENCHMARK	DIFFERENCE
I have enough information to do my job well	62	68	-6
Management communications			
My manager communicates effectively	57	61	-4
My manager communicates my feelings/thoughts upwards on important issues	58	60	-2
Senior management are open and honest in their communications with staff	28	34	-6
Senior managers are sufficiently visible in this organisation	34	41	-7
Vision, values and priorities			
I am aware of the organisation's long term goals	64	62	2
I have a good understanding of Plymouth City Council's vision	65	-	-
I have a good understanding of Plymouth city Council's priorities	59	-	-

Sources of information (2007 staff survey)

Just under 70 per cent of staff said getting information direct from their line manager was in their top three preferred ways of receiving information, though just 56 per cent said this was currently one of the three top ways in which they receive information now.

The Staff Room intranet was the most used source of information.

	Current 1st most used	Current top three	Preferred 1st	Preferred top 3
Staff Room Intranet	27	54	16	46
Work colleagues	14	43	1	13
Line manager	25	56	41	69
Upfront magazine	4	22	2	16
Team briefings	10	40	16	54
Local media	3	12	0	1

Team briefing

A corporate team briefing system was launched in 2006 alongside guidance for managers on internal communications and team briefings.

The 2007 staff survey showed:

- 52% were briefed at least monthly by their line manager
- 8% were briefed quarterly
- 18% were rarely or never briefed.

The survey showed face-to-face communication from line managers was employees' preferred source in information, yet only 10 per cent of staff said that it was currently their main source of information.

The team briefing has been sporadic during 2009 and a commitment has now been made to commission a briefing once a month.

Staff newsletter Upfront

The staff publication has been published monthly since 2006 and has been made available electronically through the Staff Room intranet and by the distribution of 500 hard copies to council offices with large numbers of staff without access to a PC.

The 2007 staff survey showed:

- 56% of respondents read Upfront regularly
- 44% rarely or never read it

Of those who never read it or rarely read it:

- No one said it was because it was not interesting
- 38% said they were too busy
- 48% said they rarely or never see a copy.

This demonstrated a significant problem with the distribution of Upfront. The vast majority of readers were reading it online and therefore also had access to Staff Room.

As a result publication was suspended in February 2009 pending a review of its effectiveness. A new staff publication will be introduced at the end of 2010 if the staff survey shows that one is needed.

Payslip communication

A monthly payslip newsletter was an effective way of updating all staff on the 18-month job evaluation project as more than half of employees do not have access to a PC. Inserts containing corporate messages that affect all staff are now included in payslips on an ad hoc basis. This does not always provide good value for money and there are opportunities for doing a more regular payslip publication that combines these communications. This is a priority for 2010/11.

Induction

The corporate induction is an important method of communicating the aims and values and of the organisation to new employees, as well as setting the style and tone of our communication. It also introduces staff to members of the corporate management team. The induction was revised in 2009 to give it greater focus. It is important that the induction is better linked to the other information provided to potential and new employees during the rest of the recruitment process and this is a priority for 2011/12.

Staff Room intranet

The home page of the intranet appears on all networked PCs on start-up. Considerable effort has been put in to ensure that the news page is updated daily and contains brief news items and that important information and useful documents are easy to find.

Performance is monitored through page hits and through the Staff Survey. The 2007 survey showed:

- 58% of respondents used it daily
- 28% of respondents used it weekly

Corporate Communications carried out a thorough review of the Staff Room intranet and relaunched it with an entirely new structure in Spring 2010. The aim was to ensure that all content was user friendly and that staff could access the information and tools they needed to do their jobs effectively. This involved stripping out a lot of pages and rewriting content to make it more user friendly.

The aim is for every page is to answer a question, such as 'how do I...?', 'where can I...?' or 'who do I..?' The news continues to be updated daily and a 'Council today' feature has been added to alert staff to meetings and events around the Council.

Staff feedback on the new site has been positive and usage his risen significantly, though it is low in some service areas.

Staff Room usage (page hits)

2008	525,385
2009	480,836
2010	671,490 (up until 14 October)

The aim is to use staff feedback from surveys and focus groups to continue to develop content and ensure it is relevant to all employees.

Management conferences

Quarterly Team Plymouth conferences are held for third tier managers to engage them on issues affecting the whole city or the entire Council. Each event involves interactive workshops and partner organisations such as representatives fro the police or NHS Plymouth are often included. Delegates at all Team Plymouth conferences now complete evaluation forms and the feedback is used to develop future events.

Staff Conferences

Staff conferences can be an effective method of communicating strategic issues to large groups of staff, especially those that are not office based, and enabling them to provide feedback and ideas. Some departments currently hold their own staff conferences and developing annual staff conferences is a priority for 2011/12.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- Embed corporate communication standards by promoting the communications framework and linking it to the appraisals process to ensure every employee understand their roles and responsibilities for delivering good communications
- Promote understanding of the corporate vision and priorities through a package of ongoing communication that includes running a campaign showing how different teams across the council are delivering the priorities
- Use the results of the 2010 staff survey to assess whether a new staff newsletter is needed to ensure that all employees, regardless of whether or not they have access to a PC or not, are kept well informed
- Maximise the value and impact of payslip communications by joining up publicity material whenever possible
- Deliver a consistent team briefing and evaluate it through staff feedback and the staff survey. Random checks will be made to ensure they are being delivered in all service areas
- Further improve access to information through the intranet by using staff feedback on information and features they need.

APPENDIX I

Communication Standards



COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective communication is the responsibility of every City Council employee. All staff should have the opportunity to join in, share information and ask questions, while managers have particular responsibilities to communicate corporate and service issues to employees and to receive and act upon employee feedback.

ALL MANAGERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Make sure they understand how their service area contributes to delivering the vision for the city and the Council's priorities set out in the Corporate Plan
- Understand the Council's values and discuss with employees how these are relevant in their service area
- Take responsibility for discussing the impact and relevance of changes to Council policies, procedures and regulations with staff in their service area
- Meet their team a minimum of once a month to:
 - Communicate the core brief as agreed by CMT and their departmental management team and discuss how the information impacts on their service area
 - Receive and then act on feedback from staff, including concerns and suggestions
- Carry out formal annual appraisals and half-yearly progress reviews with all staff that they line manage
- Take responsibility for ensuring that no employee in their service area is excluded from the communications process, for example, by being unable to attend briefings or not having access to communications material such as the staff newsletter
- Take responsibility for sharing their experiences and examples of good practice with colleagues in other parts of the organisation

ALL EMPLOYEES HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Attend an induction when they join the organisation and read the induction pack they are given
- Make sure they understand the Council's overall objectives and their role in delivering them
- Keep up-to-date with developments in all areas of the Council by reading copies of employee communications such as the staff newsletter
- Attend and actively participate in briefings held by their manager at least once a month and use the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions.
- Use their annual appraisal and a follow up review with their manager to discuss their performance and work objectives and how they contribute to the Council's aims

ROLES

THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Chief Executive meetings with staff groups

The Chief Executive and directors will meet regularly with small groups of employees from all areas and levels of the Council. These sessions will provide employees with the opportunity to share their views on what it is like to work for the organisation and to discuss issues that concern them.

Team brief

The Corporate Management Team will agree key messages for a team brief once a month. The brief will be communicated by their management teams who in turn will communicate it to their teams using the written brief as a guide. This information will be expected to cascade throughout the organisation.

Departmental management team meetings

Directors will hold departmental management teams a minimum of once a month. Decisions and relevant CMT discussions will be fed back by senior managers and this forum should be used to cascade verbally core briefs from the Corporate Management Team. Meeting minutes should be made available to staff on the Intranet/document library.

Walking the floor

Directors should be visible to all staff in their departments. This means regularly visiting each area they manage and talking to staff.

MANAGERS

Managers are key to effective, two-way communication in the organisation. They form the link between the Corporate Management Team and employees. Their role is vital to ensure that information is disseminated and that employees are listened to and their views and concerns are fed through to senior management.

Managers at all levels have a responsibility not only to relay information but also to involve and engage staff in developing their services areas and acting on their feedback. Senior managers have a responsibility to motivate and involve middle and junior managers and to provide encouragement and support to help them communicate effectively with their teams.

The Council will support managers to communicate well through a number of opportunities, including:

Senior Management Team (SMT) workshops

Bi-monthly meetings will be held to enable assistant directors to discuss and work on key corporate issues.

Team Plymouth

Meetings of all third tier managers will be held four times a year. These will provide an opportunity for briefings on important corporate issues and for managers to provide feedback. They will also be used to enable managers to take part in the development of corporate plans and issues.

Team Briefings

All managers will hold team briefings at least once a month to feedback information from senior management and CMT meetings.

Appraisals

Are not only an important way of communicating corporate aims and objectives and setting achievement targets in line with those objectives but also of receiving feedback. They are an opportunity for managers to meet employees a minimum of twice yearly – an annual appraisal and a review meeting.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Corporate Communications service will support communications in the organisation through:

Corporate newsletter

Once a new approach for a corporate staff newsletter is agreed (following the 2010 staff survey) Corporate Communications will produce it once a month and work with HR to ensure it contains items of relevance to all employees. It will provide corporate information that is relevant to all employees, such as details of employee policies, as well as celebrate successes and examples of good practice. Regular surveys will be carried out annually to ensure the newsletter meets the needs of employees.

Staff Room Intranet

The Staff Room home page will be updated with new information for staff each day. This will highlight new policies, procedures and benefits and direct staff to where key documents are stored electronically. It will also be used to celebrate staff successes and demonstrate how individuals and teams are contributing to corporate priorities.

Team briefings

Corporate Communications will work with CMT to ensure that a monthly team briefing is issued to all third tier managers once a month.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Induction

All employees joining the City Council will be attend a corporate induction session, which will be additional to any departmental induction arrangements.

Employee suggestion scheme

All employees will be able to contribute ideas for improving the organisation through the staff suggestion scheme. All suggestions will be acknowledged and feedback given on how issues are progressed. Financial rewards will be given for the best ideas

Experienced Manager Development Programme

The programme will run twice a year and will be used to develop managers' communications skill and provide an opportunity for inter-departmental networking.

Staff Survey

A staff survey will be carried out a minimum of ever two years and will determine staff attitudes and the effectiveness of the communications methods outlined in this strategy.

Liaison with trade unions

Trade unions play an important role in the communication process and effective communication with them is central to positive employee relations. Human Resources will lead on all communication with trade unions. Quarterly meetings will be held with trade unions through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). These meetings will allow for formal discussion on terms and conditions of service and all matters affecting employees. Departmental joint consultative meetings should also take place quarterly.

Measuring performance

We will measure our success in achieving our objectives by:

- Assessing how many staff are meeting the minimum standards through appraisals and our competency framework
- Using our annual staff survey to measure how well informed employees are and levels of staff engagement, advocacy and awareness of the organisation's objectives.
- Assessing the level of feedback from team briefings and staff suggestion schemes.