

**Committee:** Standards Committee  
**Date:** 25 January 2010  
**Title:** Communications  
**Author:** Richard Auty, Head of Community Engagement. Ext 500.

**Agenda Item**

**4**

Item for  
information

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### Summary

- 1 This report summarises the council's approach to external communications, as requested by the committee.

### Recommendations

That the committee notes the report.

### Background Papers

Standards England Website

Draft Uttlesford District Council External Communications Strategy

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	This report relates to the council's external communications
Community Safety	none
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	none
Ward-specific impacts	none
Workforce/Workplace	none

**Situation**

- 2 The Standards Committee has requested information on the council's communications function and specifically how it can support the work of the Standards Committee.
- 3 The council employs two communications professionals – the Head of Community Engagement (although communications responsibilities only account for a small proportion of his job) and a Website and Communications Officer, whose time is split approximately half and half between the website/intranet and wider communications such as media enquiries, press release and publications.
- 4 The main responsibilities of the communications team are:
  - Media management (responding to media enquiries; researching and writing press releases)
  - Residents magazine (Uttlesford Life and the tenants' magazine Housing News)
  - Internal communications (including staff newsletter Utterings and the council's new intranet)
  - Sole management of the council's website (including responsibility for some of the add-on systems such as CMiS – the Committee Management System)
  - Leaflets and other publications
  - Corporate design and branding (draft guides being prepared)
  - Strategic communications advice
  - Photographic support
  - Some involvement in consultation
- 5 The communications team already supports the work of the Standards Committee by issuing press releases and placing public notices after hearings, as requested by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 6 At the time of the change over in responsibilities for dealing with Standards complaints, this was publicised through the residents' magazine Uttlesford Life and the local media.
- 7 The communications team is happy to support the work of the Standards Committee within available resources. The Standards Committee may wish to consider what it considers to be the important messages it wishes to communicate.
- 8 Standards England produces a press toolkit, a copy of which has been requested and may arrive prior to the committee meeting. The Standards England website indicates it is primarily aimed at dealing

## Communications

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with media enquiries about Standards issues. The committee would be welcome to review its contents at the committee meeting.

- 9 Attached as Appendix A is the council's draft external communications strategy, which sets out in some detail the function of the communications team and a plan to improve on several areas. The document is currently out for consultation with various officers and members who were interviewed as part of the process of creating the strategy. Committee members will gain a fuller understanding of the role external communications plays through this document.

## Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<b>That the council fails to communicate effectively with its stakeholders</b>	<b>2 – Although the communications team works hard to fulfil requests, limited capacity may have an effect from time to time</b>	<b>2 – Work is always prioritised to ensure the most important communications requests and issues are dealt with in a timely manner</b>	<b>Actions contained in the external communications strategy will help to further tighten practices and procedures</b>

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.