COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2017 - 2021

DRAFT

Contents

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Good communication is essential for every organisation. Effective communication helps organisations to manage, motivate, influence, explain and inform, and for the Comhairle, good communication helps strengthen democracy and allows for participation with and by the Comhairle's key stakeholders, including the public and the Comhairle's employees

1.2   *Stakeholders* can best be defined as: A person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in an organisation. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organisation's actions, objectives and policies.)

The Comhairle's stakeholders in terms of communication are:

Internal:	*External*
Members	Public
Employees	Media
Trade Unions	Scottish, UK and European Governments and agencies
	Community Planning Partners and other agencies

1.3   This Strategy is intended to benefit the Comhairle and its internal and external stakeholders. The benefits of implementing the Strategy should be that:

- The Comhairle's services will be better known, understood and accessed by the public and other stakeholders.
- The Comhairle's achievements will be better known by the public and other stakeholders
- The Comhairle's aims and aspirations will be better known by the public and other stakeholders. For example, communications have been important in getting across the key messages and as part of the lobbying/campaigning arising from the *Our Islands: Our Future* campaign.

- The Comhairle's stakeholders will know more about the organisation and will have the opportunity to contribute views and ideas and contribute to the decision making process.
- Comhairle employees will know more about the organisation and will have the opportunity to give views and ideas and contribute to the decision making process

- The Comhairle can raise awareness of and explain decisions and policies, justify actions and respond to criticism. The Comhairle should also rebut inaccuracies or falsehoods where appropriate.

1.4 There are a range of communication methods from the traditional to the new. Different means of communication may be more effective in reaching different audiences. However, all communication should be clear, concise and well-targeted.

1.5 In formulating this strategy, recognition has been taken of the Comhairle's aspirations for the Gaelic language as outlined in the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan.

1.6 Good communication will help the Comhairle to achieve its strategic, corporate and service objectives in line with the Corporate Strategy, Business Plans and the Single Outcome Agreement.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The key aims of the strategy are to promote better understanding of the Comhairle's role in the community and its contribution to the life of those who live in the Outer Hebrides and other stakeholders. As well as communicating effectively with the community, the Comhairle must also ensure that communications with the workforce within our organisation are effective and focussed to ensure staff are informed, motivated and understand the vital role of communications at every level.

2.2 The Communications Strategy is a framework with an improvement ethos built into it to ensure that the workforce and the community are at the heart of the process to improve participation in the democratic process and ensure that our communications are clear and consistent: Listening involves valuing input, acting on feedback and changing behaviour. Communications with the community and the workforce in Gaelic or English are based on timely and effective principles, building understanding and trust with individuals, stakeholders, external organisations and the communities we serve. Effective communication at all levels is a cornerstone of responsible, effective and

Professional organisations. We should aim to be proactive in all our communications although we also require to react and rebut where appropriate.

2.3 **Key Objectives**

a) To identify and distribute timely, accurate and relevant information about the Comhairle's services through the most appropriate channels for the audience.

b) To maximise positive media coverage of the Comhairle's work, policies and achievements.

c) To ensure the Comhairle's communications – spoken, written and electronic – are clear, consistent and effective.

d) To develop and increase use of Gaelic in Comhairle's communications including on the Comhairle's website which is a key channel of communication.

e) To inform and empower all staff and Members to act as ambassadors for the Comhairle.

f) To ensure, by clear and consistent corporate branding, that the Comhairle is recognised and respected as a corporate body.

g) To ensure communications are a fundamental part of corporate thinking, including the adequate allocation of resources.

h) To work with partners, community organisations and stakeholders to publicise joint initiatives and work.

i) To ensure public understanding and participation in local government and to demonstrate process is increased and maintained.

j) To ensure that the plan for Comhairle communications in any emergency is effective and adequate.

ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES

3.1   Objective 1

To identify and distribute timely, accurate and relevant information about the Comhairle's services through the most appropriate channels for the audience.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Media releases/phot os	Media Coverage	Media/Public/other stakeholders	As appropriate e.g. around Committee decision/new service/opening event	Departments/Comms Section/Members
b) Website – Internet	Internet coverage	Public/employees /Members/ other stakeholders	Ongoing	Comms section/ Departments/ I.T.
c) Committee Reports	Media coverage/Internet coverage	Public/employees/ other stakeholders	As per Committee schedules	Departments/Comms section
d) Public Engagement/ Consultation	Public Attendance at meetings/feedback	Public/other stakeholders	As appropriate e.g. Budget Consultation Meetings/Public engagement	Departments/Members
e) Leaflets/Posters	Leaflet take-up/Service takeup/feedback	Public	Ongoing	Departments

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
f) Twitter	Number of Followers	Public/other stakeholders who are Twitter users	Ongoing	Chief Executive's office
g) Facebook - Services and Corporate	Number of users/likes	Public/other stakeholders who are Facebook users	Ongoing	Departments/Chief Executive's Office
h) Public Information Section of Website	Number of users	Public/employees/other stakeholders	As appropriate eg school closures/severe weather.	Departments

3.2   Objective 2

To maximise positive media coverage of the Comhairle's work, policies and achievements.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Media Releases	Media coverage	Media/public/other stakeholders	As appropriate/Committee schedule/new developments/opening	Comms section/ Members/ Departments
b) Website - Internet	Media coverage	Public/media/other stakeholders	As media releases issued	Comms section/ Members/Departments/ I.T.
c) Committee Reports/meetings	Media coverage	Public/media/other stakeholders	As per Committee schedule	Departments/Members
d) Media briefings/liaison	Media coverage	Media/public	As appropriate	Comms section/ Members/ Departments
e) Making Gaelic speakers available for interviews etc.	Gaelic interviews on Radio and TV	Gaelic speakers/learners	As required/ongoing	Comms section/ Members/ Officers
f) Make interviewees available for radio/TV	TV/radio appearances and interviews	TV and radio audiences	As appropriate	Members/Officers/ Comms section

3.3   Objective 3

To ensure the Comhairle's communications – spoken, written and electronic are clear, consistent and effective.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) All Comhairle Media Releases issued through Comms. Section	Media coverage	Media/public/other stakeholders	Ongoing but based around news events	Comms section/ Members/Departments
b) Media training	Trained spokespersons.	Media/public/other stakeholders	Chairs/Directors/ Heads of Service to be offered media training	Members/Comms section/Departments
c) Department newsletters etc to be copied to Comms. section	Newsletters etc received by Comms. section	Other stakeholders/public	As newsletters etc produced	Departments
d) Front page of website to be used for rolling key Comhairle messages (Currently under review –	Front page of website	Public/other stakeholders/employees (Intranet)	Ongoing but to be regularly reviewed as to which messages are replaced with new ones	Comms Section

3.4   Objective 4

To develop and increase use of Gaelic in Comhairle's communications including on the Comhairle's website which is a key channel of communication

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Press releases issued in bi-lingual format as far as possible and posted on website	Bi-lingual press releases	Media/ public/other stakeholders	Ongoing	Comms section/ Members/ Sgioba na Gàidhlig
b) Key documents to be published bi-lingually and posted on website	Bi-lingual documents on website	Media/public/other stakeholders	As per publication of key documents	Comms section/Sgioba na Gàidhlig/ Departments
c) Bi-lingually tweet	Bi-lingual tweets	Public/other Stakeholders	Ongoing	

3.5   Objective 5

To inform and empower all staff and Members to act as ambassadors for the Comhairle.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Dedicated employee section of Intranet	Employee information	Employees	Ongoing	Departments
b) Email	Information in e-mails	Employees/Members/ other stakeholders	Ongoing	Departments/Members
c) Employee Suggestion Scheme	Suggestions being made	Employees	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Department
d) Employee Survey	Employee responses	Employees	Once every 3 years – next due next year	Chief Executive's Department
e) Committee Process	Comhairle decisions	Members/Public/Employees	As per Committee schedule	Departments/Members

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
h) Intranet	Use of Intranet	Employees/Members	Ongoing	Departments/I.T.
i) provide comms advice to Members/officers	Providing advice	Public/other stakeholders	Ongoing	Comms Section

3.6　Objective 6

To ensure, by clear and consistent corporate branding, that the Comhairle is recognized and respected as a corporate body.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Use of Corporate Logo and bilingual slogan	Logo on Letterheads, documents etc. Bi-lingual slogan.	Public, employees, other stakeholders	Ongoing	Departments/Members
b) Use of Gaelic as per Gaelic Policy	Bi-lingual documents, signage etc	Public, employees, other stakeholders	Ongoing	Departments/members/ Sgioba na Gàidhlig/
c) Corporate Strategy-	Adoption of Corporate Strategy and promotion by Comhairle	Public/employees/other stakeholders	Corporate Plan - To be considered by Comhairle ?	Members/Chief Executive's Office/
d) Consistent Advertising – through Procurement Section/Chief Executive's Office)	adverts	Public/other stakeholders	Ongoing	Departments

3.7   Objective 7

To ensure communications are a fundamental part of corporate thinking, including the adequate allocation of resources.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Monitoring and review of Communications Strategy	Review and monitoring through Business Planning/PPR etc	Members, employees	Ongoing	Comms. section/ Members
b) Comhairle Management Team to consider Communications on a regular basis	Minutes of Management team meetings	Members of Management Team	Quarterly	Comms. Section/ Management Team

3.8   Objective 8

To work with partners, community organisations and stakeholders to publicise joint initiatives.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) Assist Community Planning Partners with Communications advice	No of activities	Other stakeholders/public	Around CPP meetings and other activities eg Community Engagement meetings	Comms. section
b) Take part in joint initiatives where appropriate eg OIOF/Population	No of joint initiatives	Public/Members	As required	Comms Section/ Members/Departments
c) Assist community organisations with Communications advice	No of requests	Public/other stakeholders	As required	Comms Section/ Members/Departments
d) Assist partner organisations with advice on Gaelic communication	Production of Gaelic Language Plans or other publications or initiatives	Public/other stakeholders	As required	Sgioba na Gàidhlig/Comms Section

3.9   Objective 9:

To ensure public understanding and participation in local government and to demonstrate process is increased and maintained.

Channel and Action	Outcome/ Evidence	Audience	Timescale	Owner
a) FoI Requests are responded to timeously	Number of FoI requests dealt with	Media/Public/Other organisations	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Dept.
b) Electronic agendas	Production of electronic Agendas on Intranet and Internet	Media/public/other stakeholders/Members/employees	Published on web in line with Committee Meetings (Thursday preceding meetings)	Chief Executive's Dept.
c) Audio of Meetings on Internet	Meetings being broadcast	Media/Public/Employees/Other Stakeholders	According to Meetings Schedule	Chief Executive's Department
d) Agendas and minutes on website	Agendas and Minutes available on internet	Media/public/other stakeholders/Members/employees	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Dept./ I.T.
e) E-sgire-Community Portal	E-sgire kept up to date	Public/Employees/Other Stakeholders eg Community Councils	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Department

3.10 Objective 10

To ensure that the plan for Comhairle communications in any emergency is effective and adequate.

a) That Communications continue to be considered in the formulation of Emergency Plans in consultation with EPO	Communications Section in Emergency Plans	Other agencies/employees	As part of review and formulation of Emergency Plans	Comms section/Chief Executive's Dept.
b) Ensure effective access to website/social media to disseminate information during emergency	Website access out of hours.	Public/members/other agencies	As required.	Faire/Comms Section

MONITORING AND REVIEW

4.1   The Communications Strategy should be flexible enough to adapt to internal and external environmental factors. If there is a problem or a gap identified in the way we communicate or in the processes used there must be openness and flexiblility to change them in order to improve..

4.2   Internal communications can be assessed via staff surveys, questionnaires and feedback opportunities.

4.3   The success of external communications are not so easy to monitor although public consultations, meetings and surveys help to gauge the effectiveness of public communications.

Monitoring and evaluation

4.5   We monitor our progress in different ways, including:

- monitoring our coverage in newspapers, on radio and television. Local coverage is partially reported as a Key Performance Indicator.   Media coverage can be measured in terms of advertising equivalent rates using software packages which would require investment
- considering feedback from the website, questionnaires, surveys on specific issues, key contacts and opinion formers
  - Through Interplan
- events debriefing

4.6   Assessing the effectiveness of the Communications Strategy could be done in a number of ways –

a   As part of the Employee Survey – asking employees to participate in surveys and assessing feedback and reacting accordingly;

b   Feedback process – using electronic newsletter.

c   As part of Public Consultations Surveys – questioning the public to gauge whether they feel informed;

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d   Stakeholders Consultation – stakeholders, such as Community Planning Partners could be consulted to gauge effectiveness of communications strategy in relation to joint working/co-operation.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

5.1   Communications within a local authority reflect a fast changing political and service environment and the Comhairle needs to be flexible enough to recognise and implement new technologies and developments where appropriate.

5.2   We are currently using **Twitter** and **Facebook** as our main social media channels. This is likely to develop in the future.

5.3   Training may be required to keep abreast of latest technologies/developments