

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Policy and Governance)	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22 March 2018

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION WITH COUNCILLORS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To review communications with Councillors as requested at the meeting in October.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To note the report.
3. To review this issue again in October 2018.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	✓

BACKGROUND

5. At the Overview of Scrutiny Committee on 12 October 2017 the Director (Policy and Governance) gave a presentation which provided information on the role and responsibilities of the Council's communications and events team and the role other services have to play in communicating internally and externally.
6. As a result of the presentation the Committee requested a broader review of how Members are kept informed about key areas of work being delivered by officers.

COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

7. Members receive information in different ways;
 - intheknow (fortnightly)
 - intheboro (monthly)
 - Member Learning Sessions
 - briefing notes
 - emails directly from officers
 - agenda papers
 - undertaking overview and scrutiny inquiries

- briefings (for Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Executive Member and portfolio briefings, Opposition briefing etc) and,
 - Press releases
 - The Chorley Council website
 - to a lesser extent, the intranet
 - Social Media
8. Member Support Working Group reviewed intheknow as a communication tool in September 2017, including;
- Look and feel / layout
 - Functionality
 - Content
 - Regularity
9. They discussed the effectiveness of the publication which they felt continued to be a really useful tool. It was agreed that no changes to the publication were required. However, Democratic Services will promote the use of intheknow with officers as a communication tool with Members.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: WARD / PROJECTS INFORMATION / STAFFING CHANGES

10. Members identified several areas where further information is needed, including activities happening in their ward, being kept up to date on the progress of neighbourhood projects and staffing changes.
11. A request for ongoing information for Members will be sent to the Directorates in question. There have been some staffing changes within some of the teams, and new staff will be made aware of the different communication mechanisms with Members.
12. Members may wish to review whether there is an improvement in communication in six months or so (October 2018).

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: MY ACCOUNT ENHANCEMENTS

13. At the February 18 meeting of the Member Support Working Group Members invited the Director ((Customer and Digital) to the meeting to discuss methods for Councillors to contact officers.
14. It was discussed that Members had previously agreed the Digital Strategy. Within this Members had agreed the process of reporting service requests was best achieved through the MyAccount System. It was discussed if this process is not followed the audit trail is lost which Members agreed was important when following up requests.
15. "Members advised that their queries were not always regarding casework or service requests that needed reporting, often members simply needed to find out information. In these circumstances telephoning the Contact Centre was time consuming and not considered convenient.
16. "Members were reminded that a list containing senior officer contact details (including telephone numbers) was available in the Members' Room. In addition, the council was looking to create a dynamic application on the iPads via the council's own computer system that would provide this information. Members were reminded that service requests could also be submitted online. It was agreed that members be encouraged that the correct format be to call the Contact Centre when the request was for casework/service requests but if not appropriate, members were able to telephone officers direct. Members reassured

officers that they did not want to undo the work that had already been done but simply provide a more efficient system for when members were trying contact officers”.

17. The list containing senior officer contact details (including telephone numbers) will be updated and included within the new Member Induction handbook, which is available to all Members. Democratic Services will include a link to this on intheknow in late May.
18. The issue of ward work being ‘closed’ off the system, only having it to be re-opened as the member was aware that the request had not been completed has been raised with the Director (Customer and Digital). MyChorley will be updated to provide a Ward overview by September 2018.
19. Over the next 12 months in line the ICT and Digital Strategy My Account will be reviewed. It is proposed ICT work with the Member Support Working Group to identify and implement enhancements.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

20. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors’ comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	✓
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	✓	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	✓

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

21. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

22. No comments.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR (CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL)

23. Within the next 12 months ICT will implement a Contacts app accessible via the iPads. All service requests should continue to be logged via MyAccount. Contact in respect of other matters (other than service requests) will be made to the relevant officers through the use of the new iPad app.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

24. We need to regularly review how we communicate with members as the way people consume information and technology is continually changing. This report is a good basis for starting that work to ensure everyone feels informed.

REBECCA HUDDLESTON
DIRECTOR (POLICY AND GOVERNANCE)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Ruth Rimmington	515118	1 March 2018	Review of Communication with Councillors