

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	12 September 2023
SUBJECT:	Partnership Communications Strategy
PURPOSE:	To consider a South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Communications Strategy
KEY DECISION:	No
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Portfolio Holder, Corporate and Communications, Councillor Jim Astill
REPORT OF:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate
REPORT AUTHOR:	Shaun Gibbons, Group Manager – Communications and Engagement
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	None

SUMMARY

When the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership formed in October 2021, the Partnership Business Case identified opportunities to bring together strategy, policy and services across the three Councils. This had the aim of improving services, achieving savings and ensuring resilience.

One of the first service reviews to be concluded was for the ‘Corporate’ Directorate, and this included the creation of a single Partnership Communications Service. Whilst working together informally since the Partnership formed, the team formally came together as single service in November 2022, creating the opportunity to fully align the communications approach.

In the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan, approved by Council in March, it was identified that a single Partnership Communications Strategy would be brought forward for consideration to provide a framework for how the Partnership communicates with internal and external audiences going forward. This report brings forward the Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Partnership Communications Strategy at Appendix A be approved.
2. That the feedback from scrutiny committees at 2.6 be noted.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To provide an aligned and consistent approach to Partnership communications with internal and external audiences.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Do nothing – this is possible, but it wouldn't support the aspirations of the Partnership to align functions or support the Partnership in delivering a consistent and co-ordinated approach to communications.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** When the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership formed in October 2021, each Council approved a Business Case for the Partnership and an associated work programme. The Business Case identified a range of opportunities for collaboration between the Partnership Councils, including the sharing of services.
- 1.2** In November 2022, following a service review, a single Communications Service was created for the Partnership, which resulted in the communications teams from South Holland District Council joining the already shared Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council team, under a single service structure.
- 1.3** Whilst the team had been informally working together since the Partnership formed in October 2021, the bringing together of the service has accelerated since November 2022 and most aspects of how the team operates are now consistent across the Partnership.
- 1.4** In March, each Council approved the 23/24 Annual Delivery Plan, which included an action to bring forward a Partnership Communications Strategy for consideration.

2. REPORT

- 2.1** This report seeks support for a Partnership Communications Strategy as set out at Appendix A.
- 2.2** The strategy is shaped on the CORE purpose communications model:
 - Change behaviour
 - Operational effectiveness of Council services.
 - Reputation management
 - Explaining policies
- 2.3** The Strategy covers the four primary communications disciplines:
 - Strategic Communications
 - External Communications
 - Internal Communications

- Media Management

- 2.4** For each discipline, the Strategy sets out what we plan to do; how we plan to do it and how we will evaluate the impact.
- 2.5** The key focus of the strategy is on strategic communication and forward planning, as well as using proactive media opportunities to develop a compelling narrative of the 'place'. The team will use their relationships with each service area to develop positive stories into content that highlights the work of each constituent council and the wider work of the Partnership. This will be underpinned by audience insights, data and content that is audience-focussed. Members and officers will have an important role to play in amplifying and sharing messaging from the Partnership's corporate communication channels, such as social media.
- 2.6** The draft Strategy was considered by the relevant scrutiny committee at each Council with the following feedback provided.

Policy Development Panel – SHDC

Comment	Response
Take the Strategy back to Policy Development Panel in one year's time to update on delivery.	In Policy Development Panel action tracker

Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee – BBC

Comment	Response
Suggestions regarding sharing success stories with Councillors.	To be picked up in a review of member communications.

Overview Committee – ELDC

Comment	Response
Request for improved Member communications to ensure ward Councillors are briefed on issues before appearing in the media.	To be picked up in a review of member communications.
Request for greater Ward Members involvement in communications activity.	To be picked up in a review of member communications.

3. CONCLUSION

That a single Partnership Communications Strategy is required to support the Partnership's ongoing development.

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

A single approach to communications will help achieve efficiency in communications activity and provide a single framework within which the Partnership can develop and deliver its communications activity.

IMPLICATIONS

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Effective communication supports the delivery of all corporate priorities.

STAFFING

Internal communications to colleagues within the Partnership and Councillors is fundamental to the Partnership's ongoing success.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

DATA PROTECTION

None

FINANCIAL

None

RISK MANAGEMENT

None

STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

Consultation has taken place with the Scrutiny Committees at each Council; the Partnership's Stakeholder Board, Portfolio Holders and Corporate Management Team.

REPUTATION

The implementation of this Strategy will help ensure the Partnership has a positive reputation.

CONTRACTS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER

None

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

None

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

None

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

MISSIONS

This paper contributes to the follow Missions outlined in the Government’s Levelling Up White paper.

Living Standards	By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
Research and Development	By 2030, domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40% and at least one third over the Spending Review period, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
Transport Infrastructure	By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
Digital Connectivity	By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.
Education	By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.
Skills	By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
Health	By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.
Wellbeing	By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Pride in Place	By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
Housing	By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government’s ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.
Crime	By 2030, homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.
Local Leadership	By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A

Partnership Communications Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Partnership Business Case	www.selcp.co.uk
Annual Delivery Plan	www.selcp.co.uk

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

Name of body	Date
The Strategy has been presented to the relevant scrutiny committee at each of the Partnership's Councils during July 2023.	

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Shaun Gibbons, Group Manager – Communications and Engagement
Signed off by:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate
Approved for publication:	Portfolio Holder, Corporate and Communications, Councillor Jim Astill